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MEMOIRS

OF

THE LIFE

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

1843

BY

J. G. LOCKHART.

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MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

CHAPTER I.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EDINBURGH REVIEW—PROGRESS OF THE TRISTREM—AND OF THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL—VISIT OF WORDSWORTH—PUBLICATION OF "SIR TRISTREM."—1803–1304.

Shortly after the complete "Minstrelsy" issued from the press, Scott made his first appearance as a reviewer. The Edinburgh Review had been commenced in October, 1802, under the superintendence of the Rev. Sidney Smith, with whom, during his short residence in Scotland, he had lived on terms of great kindness and familiarity. Mr. Smith soon resigned the editorship to Mr. Jeffrey, who had by this time been for several years among the most valued of Scott's friends and companions at the bar; and, the new journal being far from committing itself to violent politics at the outset, he appreciated the brilliant talents regularly engaged in it far too highly, not to be well pleased with the opportunity of occasionally exercising his pen in its service. His first contribution was, I believe, an article on Southey's Amadis of Gaul, included in the number for October, 1803. Another, on Sibbald's Chronicle of Scottish Poetry, appeared in the same number:—a third, on Godwin's Life of Chaucer; a fourth, on Ellis's Specimens of Ancient Eng-

lish Poetry; and a fifth, on the Life and Works of Chatterton, followed in the course of 1804.*

During the summer of 1803, however, his chief literary labor was still on the "Tristrem;" and I shall presently give some further extracts from his letters to Ellis, which will amply illustrate the spirit in which he continued his researches about the Seer of Ercildoune, and the interruptions which these owed to the prevalent alarm of French invasion. Both as Quarter-master of the Edinburgh Light-horse, and as Sheriff of the Forest, he had a full share of responsibility in the warlike arrangements to which the authorities of Scotland had at length been roused; nor were the duties of his two offices considered as strictly compatible by Francis Lord Napier, then Lord-lieutenant of Selkirkshire; for I find several letters in which his Lordship complains that the incessant drills and musters of Musselburgh and Portobello prevented the Sheriff from attending county meetings held at Selkirk in the course of this summer and autumn, for the purpose of organizing the trained bands of the Forest, on a scale hitherto unattempted. Lord Napier strongly urges the propriety of his resigning his connection with the Edinburgh troop, and fixing his summer residence some where within the limits of his proper jurisdiction; nay, he goes so far as to hint, that if these suggestions should be neglected, it must be his duty to state the case to the Government. Scott could not be induced, (least of all by a threat,) while the fears of invasion still prevailed, to resign his place among his old companions of "the voluntary brand;" but he seems to have presently acquiesced in the propriety of the Lord-Lieutenant's advice respecting a removal from Lasswade to Ettrick Forest.

The following extract is from a letter written at Musselburgh, during this summer or autumn:—

"Miss Seward's acceptable favor reaches me in a place, and at a time, of great bustle, as the corps of voluntary cavalry to which

* Scott's contributions to our periodical literature have been, with some trivial exceptions, included in the recent collection of his Miscellaneous Prose Writings.

I belong is quartered for a short time in this village, for the sake of drilling and discipline. Nevertheless, had your letter announced the name of the gentleman who took the trouble of forwarding it, I would have made it my business to find him out, and to prevail on him, if possible, to spend a day or two with us in quarters. We are here assuming a very military appearance. Three regiments of militia, with a formidable park of artillery, are encamped just by us. The Edinburgh troop, to which I have the honor to be quarter-master, consists entirely of young gentlemen of family, and is, of course, admirably well mounted and armed. There are other four troops in the regiment, consisting of yeomanry, whose iron faces and muscular forms announce the hardness of the climate against which they wrestle, and the powers which nature has given them to contend with and subdue it. These corps have been easily raised in Scotland, the farmers being in general a high-spirited race of men, fond of active exercises, and patient of hardship and fatigue. For myself, I must own that to one who has, like myself, *la tête un peu exaltée*, the pomp and circumstance of war gives, for a time, a very poignant and pleasing sensation. The imposing appearance of cavalry, in particular, and the rush which marks their onset, appear to me to partake highly of the sublime. Perhaps I am the more attached to this sort of sport of swords, because my health requires much active exercise, and a lameness contracted in childhood renders it inconvenient for me to take it otherwise than on horseback. I have, too, a hereditary attachment to the animal—not, I flatter myself, of the common jockey cast, but because I regard him as the kindest and most generous of the subordinate tribes. I hardly even except the dogs; at least they are usually so much better treated, that compassion for the steed should be thrown into the scale when we weigh their comparative merits. My wife (a foreigner) never sees a horse ill used without asking what that poor horse has done in his state of preëxistence? I would fain hope they have been carters or hackney coachmen, and are only experiencing a retort of the ill-usage they have formerly inflicted. What think you?"

It appears that Miss Seward had sent Scott some obscure magazine criticism on his "Minstrelsy," in which the censor had condemned some phrase as naturally suggesting a low idea. The lady's letter not having been preserved, I cannot explain further the sequel of that from which I have been quoting. Scott says, however:

"I am infinitely amused with your sagacious critic. God wot I have often admired the vulgar subtlety of such minds as can, with a depraved ingenuity, attach a mean or disgusting sense to an epithet capable of being otherwise under-

stood, and more frequently, perhaps, used to express an elevated idea. In many parts of Scotland the word *virtue* is limited entirely to *industry;* and a young divine who preached upon the moral beauties of virtue, was considerably surprised at learning that the whole discourse was supposed to be a panegyric upon a particular damsel who could spin fourteen spindles of yarn in the course of a week. This was natural; but your literary critic has the merit of going very far a-field to fetch home his degrading association."

To return to the correspondence with Ellis—Scott writes thus to him in July :—" I cannot pretend immediately to enter upon the serious discussion which you propose respecting the age of 'Sir Tristrem;' but yet, as it seems likely to strip Thomas the Prophet of the honors due to the author of the English 'Tristrem,' I cannot help hesitating before I can agree to your theory;—and here my doubt lies. Thomas of Ercildoune, called the Rhymer, is a character mentioned by almost every Scottish historian, and the date of whose existence is almost as well known as if we had the parish register. Now, his great reputation, and his designation of *Rymour*, could only be derived from his poetical performances; and in what did these consist excepting in the romance of 'Sir Tristrem,' mentioned by Robert de Brunne? I hardly think, therefore, we shall be justified in assuming the existence of an earlier *Thomas*, who would be, in fact, merely the creature of our system. I own I am not prepared to take this step, if I can escape otherwise from you and M. de la Ravaillere—and thus I will try it. M. de la R. barely informs us that the history of Sir Tristrem was known to Chretien de Troyes in the end of the twelfth century, and to the King of Navarre in the beginning of the thirteenth. Thus far his evidence goes, and I think not one inch farther—for it does not establish the existence either of the metrical romance, as you suppose, or of the prose romance, as M. de la R. much more erroneously supposes, at that very early period. If the *story* of 'Sir Tristrem' was founded in fact, and if, which I have all along thought, a person of this

name really swallowed a dose of cantharides intended to stimulate the exertions of his uncle, a petty monarch of Cornwall, and involved himself, of course, in an intrigue with his aunt, these facts must have taken place during a very early period of English history, perhaps about the time of the Heptarchy. Now, if this be once admitted, it is clear that the raw material from which Thomas wove his web, must have been current long before his day, and I am inclined to think that Chretien and the King of Navarre refer not to the special metrical romance contained in Mr. Douce's fragments, but to the general story of 'Sir Tristrem,' whose love and misfortunes were handed down by tradition as a historical fact. There is no difficulty in supposing a tale of this kind to have passed from the Armoricans, or otherwise, into the mouths of the French, as, on the other hand, it seems to have been preserved among the Celtic tribes of the Border, from whom, in all probability, it was taken by their neighbor, Thomas of Ercildoune. If we suppose, therefore, that Chretien and the King allude only to the general and well-known *story* of Tristrem, and not to the particular edition of which Mr. Douce has some fragments, (and I see no evidence that any such special allusion to these fragments is made,) it will follow that *they* may be as late as the end of the thirteenth century, and that the Thomas mentioned in them may be *the* Thomas of whose existence we have historical evidence. In short, the question is, shall Thomas be considered as a landmark by which to ascertain the antiquity of the fragments, or shall the *supposed* antiquity of the fragments be held a sufficient reason for *supposing* an earlier Thomas? For aught yet seen, I incline to my former opinion, that those fragments are coeval with the *ipsissimus Thomas*. I acknowledge the internal evidence, of which you are so accurate a judge, weighs more with me than the reference to the King of Navarre; but after all, the extreme difficulty of judging of style, so as to bring us within sixty or seventy years, must be fully considered. Take notice, I have never pleaded the matter so high as to say, that the Auchinleck MS. contains the very words devised by Thomas the Rhymer. On

the contrary, I have always thought it one of the spurious copies in *queint Inglis*, of which Robert de Brunne so heavily complains. But this will take little from the curiosity, perhaps little from the antiquity of the romance. Enough of Sir T. for the present.—How happy it will make us if you can fulfil the expectation you hold out of a northern expedition! Whether in the cottage or at Edinburgh, we will be equally happy to receive you and show you all the lions of our vicinity. Charlotte is hunting out music for Mrs. E., but I intend to add *Johnson's* collection, which, though the tunes are simple, and often bad sets, contains much more original Scotch music than any other."

About this time, Mr. and Mrs. Ellis, and their friend Douce, were preparing for a tour into the North of England; and Scott was invited and strongly tempted to join them at various points of their progress, particularly at the Grange, near Rotherham, in Yorkshire, a seat of the Earl of Effingham. But he found it impossible to escape again from Scotland, owing to the agitated state of the country.—On returning to the Cottage from an excursion to his Sheriffship, he thus resumes:—

"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"Lasswade, August 27, 1803.

"Dear Ellis,

"My conscience has been thumping me as hard as if it had studied under Mendoza, for letting your kind favor remain so long unanswered. Nevertheless, in this it is like Launcelot Gobbo's, but a hard kind of conscience, as it must know how much I have been occupied with Armies of Reserve, and Militia, and Pikemen, and Sharpshooters, who are to descend from Ettrick Forest to the confusion of all invaders. The truth is, that this country has for once experienced that the pressure of external danger may possibly produce internal unanimity; and so great is the present military zeal, that I really wish our rulers would devise some way of calling it into action, were it only on the economical principle of saving so much good courage from idle evaporation.—I am interrupted by an extraordinary accident, nothing less than a volley of small-shot fired through the window, at which my wife was five minutes before arranging her flowers. By Camp's assistance, who run the culprit's foot like a Liddesdale bloodhound, we detected an unlucky sportsman, whose awkwardness and rashness might

have occasioned very serious mischief—so much for interruption. —To return to Sir Tristrem. As for Thomas's *name*, respecting which you state some doubts,* I request you to attend to the following particulars:—In the first place, surnames were of very late introduction into Scotland, and it would be difficult to show that they became in general a hereditary distinction, until after the time of Thomas the Rhymer; previously they were mere personal distinctions, peculiar to the person by whom they were borne, and dying along with him. Thus the children of *Alan Durward* were not called *Durward*, because they were not *Ostiarii*, the circumstance from which he derived the name. When the surname was derived from property, it became naturally hereditary at a more early period, because the distinction applied equally to the father and the son. The same happened with *patronymics*, both because the name of the father is usually given to the son; so that Walter Fitzwalter would have been my son's name in those times as well as my own; and also because a clan often takes a sort of general patronymic from one common ancestor, as Macdonald, &c. &c. But though these classes of surnames become hereditary at an early period, yet, in the natural course of things, epithets merely personal are much longer of becoming a family distinction.† But I do not trust, by any means, to this general argument; because the charter quoted in the Minstrelsy contains written evidence, that the epithet of *Rymour* was peculiar to our Thomas, and was dropped by his son, who designs himself simply, *Thomas of Erceldoune, son of Thomas the Rymour of Erceldoune;* which I think

* Mr. Ellis had hinted that "*Rymer* might not more necessarily indicate an actual poet, than the name of *Taylor* does in modern times an actual knight of the thimble."

† The whole of this subject has derived much illustration from the recent edition of the "Ragman's Roll," a contribution to the Bannatyne Club of Edinburgh by two of Sir Walter Scott's most esteemed friends, the Lord Chief Commissioner Adam, and Sir Samuel Shepherd. That record of the oaths of fealty tendered to Edward I., during his Scotch usurpation, furnishes, indeed, very strong confirmation of the views which the Editor of "Sir Tristrem" had thus early adopted concerning the origin of surnames in Scotland. The landed gentry, over most of the country, seem to have been then generally distinguished by the surnames still borne by their descendants—it is wonderful how little the land seems to have changed hands in the course of so many centuries. But the towns' people have, with few exceptions, designations apparently indicating the actual trade of the individual; and, in many instances, there is distinct evidence that the plan of transmitting such names had not been adopted; for example, Thomas the Tailor is described as son of Thomas the Smith, or *vice versâ*. The chief magistrates of the burghs appear, however, to have been, in most cases, younger sons of the neighboring gentry, and have of course their hereditary designations. This singular document, so often quoted and referred to, was never before printed *in extenso*.

is conclusive upon the subject. In all this discussion, I have scorned to avail myself of the tradition of the country, as well as the suspicious testimony of Boece, Dempster, &c., grounded probably upon that tradition, which uniformly affirms the name of Thomas to have been Learmont or Leirmont, and that of the Rhymer a personal epithet. This circumstance may induce us, however, to conclude that some of his descendants had taken that name—certain it is that his castle is called Leirmont's Tower, and that he is as well known to the country people by that name, as by the appellation of the Rhymer.

"Having cleared up this matter, as I think, to every one's satisfaction, unless to those resembling not Thomas himself, but his namesake the Apostle, I have, secondly, to show that my Thomas is the *Tomas* of Douce's MS. Here I must again refer to the high and general reverence in which Thomas appears to have been held, as is proved by Robert de Brunne; but above all, as you observe, to the extreme similarity betwixt the French and English poems, with this strong circumstance, that the *mode* of telling the story approved by the French minstrel, under the authority of his Tomas, is the very mode in which my Thomas has told it. Would you desire better sympathy?

"I lately met by accident a Cornish gentleman, who had taken up his abode in Selkirkshire for the sake of fishing—and what should his name be but *Caerlion*? You will not doubt that this interested me very much. He tells me that there is but one family of the name in Cornwall, or, as far as ever he heard, any where else, and that they are of great antiquity. Does not this circumstance seem to prove that there existed in Cornwall a place called Caerlion, giving name to that family? Caerlion would probably be *Castrum Leonense*, the chief town of Liones, which in every romance is stated to have been Tristrem's country, and from which he derived his surname of Tristrem *de Liones*. This district, as you notice in the notes on the *Fabliaux*, was swallowed up by the sea. I need not remind you that all this tends to illustrate the *Caerlioun* mentioned by Tomas, which I always suspected to be a very different place from Caerlion on Uske—which is no seaport. How I regret the number of leagues which prevented my joining you and the sapient Douce, and how much ancient lore I have lost! Where I have been, the people talked more of the praises of Ryno and Fillan (not Ossian's heroes, but two Forest greyhounds which I got in a present) than, I verily believe, they would have done of the prowesses of Sir Tristrem, or of Esplandian, had either of them appeared to lead on the levy *en masse*. Yours ever,

W. Scott."

Ellis says in reply:—

"My dear Scott, I must begin by congratulating you on Mrs. Scott's escape; Camp, if he had had no previous title to immortal-

'ty, would deserve it, for his zeal and address in detecting the stupid marksman, who, while he took aim at a bird on a tree, was so near shooting your fair 'bird in bower.' If there were many such shooters, it would become then a sufficient excuse for the reluctance of Government to furnish arms indifferently to all volunteers. In the next place, I am glad to hear that you are disposed to adopt my channel for transmitting the tale of Tristrem to Chretien de Troye. The more I have thought on the subject, the more I am convinced that the Normans, long before the Conquest, had acquired from the Britons of Armorica a considerable knowledge of our old British fables, and that this led them, after the Conquest, to inquire after such accounts as were to be found in the country where the events are supposed to have taken place. I am satisfied, from the internal evidence of Geoffrey of Monmouth's History, that it must have been fabricated in Bretagne, and that he did, as he asserts, only *translate* it. Now, as *Marie*, who lived about a century later, *certainly* translated also from the Breton a series of lays relating to Arthur and his knights, it will follow that the first poets who wrote in *France*, such as Chretien, &c., must have acquired their knowledge of our traditions from Bretagne. Observe, that the pseudo-Turpin, who is supposed to have been anterior to Geoffrey, and who, on that supposition, cannot have borrowed from him, mentions, among Charlemagne's heroes, Hoel, (the hero of Geoffrey also,) 'de quo canitur cantilena usque ad hodiernum diem.' Now, if Thomas was able to establish his story as the most *authentic*, even by the avowal of the French themselves, and if the *sketch* of that story was previously known, it must have been because he wrote in the country which his hero was supposed to have inhabited; and on the same grounds the Norman minstrels here, and even their English successors, were allowed to fill up with as many circumstances as they thought proper the tales of which the Armorican Bretons probably furnished the first imperfect outline.

"What you tell me about your Cornish fisherman is very curious; and I think with you that little reliance is to be placed on our Welsh geography—and that Caerlion on Uske is by no means *the* Caerlion of Tristrem. Few writers or readers have hitherto considered sufficiently that from the moment when Hengist first obtained a settlement in the Isle of Thanet, that settlement became *England*, and all the rest of the country became *Wales;* that these divisions continued to represent different proportions of the island at different periods; but that Wales, during the whole Heptarchy, and for a long time after, comprehended the whole western coast very nearly from Cornwall to Dunbretton; and that this whole tract, of which the eastern frontier may be easily traced for each particular period, preserved most probably to the age of Thomas a community of language, of manners, and traditions.

"As your last volume announces your *Lay*, as well as *Sir Tristrem*, as *in the press*, I begin, in common with all your friends,

to be uneasy about the future disposal of your time. Having nothing but a very active profession, and your military pursuits, and your domestic occupations, to think of, and Leyden having monopolized Asiatic lore, you will presently be quite an idle man! You are, however, still in time to learn Erse, and it is, I am afraid, very necessary that you should do so, in order to stimulate my laziness, which has hitherto made no progress whatever in Welsh. Your ever faithful G. E.

"P. S.—*Is Camp married yet?*"

Ellis had projected, some time before this, an edition of the Welsh *Mabinogion*, in which he was to be assisted by Mr. Owen, the author of the "Welsh and English Dictionary," "Cambrian Biography," &c.

"I am very sorry," Scott says, (September 14,) "that you flag over those wild and interesting tales. I hope, if you will not work yourself, (for which you have so little excuse, having both the golden talents and the golden leisure necessary for study,) you will, at least, keep Owen to something that is rational—I mean to *iron horses*, and *magic caldrons*, and *Bran the Blessed*, with the music of his whole army upon his shoulders, and, in short, to something more pleasing and profitable than old apophthegms, triads, and 'blessed burdens of the womb of the isle of Britain.' Talking of such burdens, Camp has been regularly wedded to a fair dame in the neighborhood—but, notwithstanding the Italian policy of locking the lady in a stable, she is suspected of some inaccuracy; but we suspend judgment, as Othello ought in all reason to have done, till we see the produce of the union. As for my own employment, I have yet much before me; and, as the beginning of letting out ink is like the letting out of water, I dare say I shall go on scribbling one nonsense or another to the end of the chapter. People may say this and that of the pleasure of fame or of profit as a motive of writing: I think the only pleasure is in the actual exertion and research, and I would no more write upon any other terms than I would hunt merely to dine upon hare-soup. At the same time, if credit and profit came unlooked for, I would no more quarrel with them than with the soup. I hope this will find you and Mrs. Ellis safely and pleasantly settled

'In Yorkshire, near fair Rotherham.

"—By the way, while you are in his neighborhood, I hope you will not fail to inquire into the history of the valiant 'Moor of Moorhall and the Dragon of Wantley.' As a noted burlesque upon the popular romance, the ballad has some curiosity and merit. Ever yours, W. S."

Mr. Ellis received this letter where Scott hoped it would reach him, at the seat of Lord Effingham; and he answers, on the 3d of October:—

"The beauty of this part of the country is such as to indemnify the traveller for a few miles of very indifferent road, and the tedious process of creeping up and almost sliding down a succession of high hills; and, in the number of picturesque landscapes by which we are encompassed, the den of the dragon which you recommended to our attention is the most superlatively beautiful and romantic. You are, I suppose, aware that this same den is the very spot from whence Lady Mary Wortley Montague wrote many of her early letters; and it seems that an old housekeeper, who lived there till last year, remembered to have seen her, and dwelt with great pleasure on the various charms of her celebrated mistress; so that its wild scenes have an equal claim to veneration from the admirers of wit and gallantry, and the far-famed investigators of remote antiquity. With regard to the original dragon, I have met with two different traditions. One of these (which I think is preserved by Percy) states him to have been a wicked attorney, a relentless persecutor of the poor, who was at length, fortunately for his neighbors, ruined by a lawsuit which he had undertaken against his worthy and powerful antagonist Moor of Moorhall. The other legend, which is current in the Wortley family, states him to have been a most formidable drinker, whose powers of inglutition, strength of stomach, and stability of head, had procured him a long series of triumphs over common visitants, but who was at length fairly drunk dead by the chieftain of the opposite moors. It must be confessed that the form of the den—a cavern cut in the rock, and very nearly resembling a wine or ale cellar—tends to corroborate this tradition; but I am rather tempted to believe that both the stories were invented *apres coup*, and that the supposed dragon was some wolf or other destructive animal, who was finally hunted down by Moor of Moorhall, after doing considerable mischief to the flocks and herds of his superstitious neighbors.

"The present house appears to have grown to its even now moderate size by successive additions to a very small *logge*, (lodge,) built by 'a gentle knight, Sir Thomas Wortley,' in the time of Henry VIII., for the pleasure, as an old inscription in the present scullery testifies, of 'listening to the Hartes bell.' Its site is on the side of a very high, rocky hill, covered with oaks, (the weed of the country,) and overhanging the river Don, which in this place is little more than a mountain torrent, though it becomes navigable a few miles lower at Sheffield. A great part of the road from hence (which is seven miles distant) runs through forest ground; and I have no doubt that the whole was, at no distant period, covered with wood, because the modern improvements of

the country, the result of flourishing manufactories, have been carried on, almost within our own time, in consequence of the abundance of coal, which here breaks out, in many places, even on the surface. On the opposite side of the river begin almost immediately the extensive moors, which strike along the highest land of Yorkshire and Derbyshire, and following the chain of hills, probably communicated, not many centuries ago, with those of Northumberland, Cumberland, and Scotland. I therefore doubt whether the general face of the country is not better evidence as to the nature of the monster than the particular appearance of the cavern; and am inclined to believe that Moor of Moorhall was a hunter of wild beasts, rather than of attorneys or hard drinkers.

"You are unjust in saying that I flag over the Mabinogion—I have been very constantly employed upon my preface, and was proceeding to the last section when I set off for this place—so you see I am perfectly exculpated, and all over as white as snow. Anne being a true aristrocrat, and considering purity of blood as essential to lay the foundation of all the virtues she expects to call out by a laborious education of a true son of Camp—she highly approves the strict and even prudish severity with which you watch over the morals of his bride, and expects you, inasmuch as all the good knights she has read of have been remarkable for their incomparable beauty, not to neglect that important requisite in selecting her future guardian. We possess a vulgar dog, (a pointer,) to whom it is intended to commit the charge of our house during our absence, and to whom I mean to give orders to repel by force any attempts of our neighbors during the times that I shall be occupied in preparing *hare-soup;* but Fitz-camp will be *her* companion, and she trusts that you will strictly examine him while yet a varlet, and only send him up when you think him likely to become a true knight. *Adieu—mille choses,*

G. E."

Scott tells Ellis in reply, (October 14,) that he was "infinitely gratified with his account of Wortley Lodge and the Dragon," and refers him to the article "Kempion," in the Minstrelsy, for a similar tradition respecting an ancestor of the noble house of Somerville. The reader can hardly need to be reminded that the gentle knight Sir Thomas Wortley's love of hearing the deer *bell,* was often alluded to in Scott's subsequent writings. He goes on to express his hope, that next summer will be "a more propitious season for a visit to Scotland."

"The necessity of the present occasion," he says, "has kept almost every individual, however insignificant, to his post. God has

left us entirely to our own means of defence, for we have not above one regiment of the line in all our ancient kingdom. In the mean while, we are doing the best we can to prepare ourselves for a contest, which, perhaps, is not far distant. A beacon light, communicating with that of Edinburgh Castle, is just erecting in front of our quiet cottage. My field equipage is ready, and I want nothing but a pipe and a *schnurbartchen* to convert me into a complete hussar.* Charlotte, with the infantry, (of the household troops, I mean,) is to beat her retreat into Ettrick Forest, where, if the Tweed is in his usual wintry state of flood, she may weather out a descent from Ostend. Next year I hope all this will be over, and that not only I shall have the pleasure of receiving you in peace and quiet, but also of going with you through every part of Caledonia, in which you can possibly be interested. Friday se'ennight our corps takes the field for ten days—for the second time within three months—which may explain the military turn of my epistle.

"Poor Ritson is no more. All his vegetable soups and puddings have not been able to avert the evil day, which, I understand, was preceded by madness. It must be worth while to inquire who has got his MSS.—I mean his own notes and writings. The 'Life of Arthur,' for example, must contain many curious facts and quotations, which the poor defunct had the power of assembling to an astonishing degree, without being able to combine any thing like a narrative, or even to deduce one useful inference—witness his 'Essay on Romance and Minstrelsy,' which reminds one of a heap of rubbish, which had either turned out unfit for the architect's purpose, or beyond his skill to make use of. The ballads he had collected in Cumberland and Northumberland, too, would greatly interest me. If they have fallen into the hands of any liberal collector, I dare say I might be indulged with a sight of them. Pray inquire about this matter.

"Yesterday Charlotte and I had a visit which we owe to Mrs. E. A rosy lass, the sister of a bold yeoman in our neighborhood, entered our cottage, towing in a monstrous sort of bull-dog, called emphatically Cerberus, whom she came on the part of her brother to beg our acceptance of, understanding we were anxious to have a son of Camp. Cerberus was no sooner loose (a pleasure which, I suspect, he had rarely enjoyed) than his father (*supposé*) and he engaged in a battle which might have been celebrated by the author of the 'Unnatural Combat,' and which, for aught I know, might

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* *Schnurbartchen* is German for mustachio. It appears from a page of an early note-book previously transcribed, that Scott had been sometimes a smoker of tobacco in the first days of his light-horsemanship. He had laid aside the habit at the time when this letter was written; but he twice again resumed it, though he never carried the indulgence to any excess.

have turned out a combat *à l'outrance*, if I had not interfered with a horsewhip instead of a baton, as *juge de Camp*. The odds were indeed greatly against the stranger knight—two fierce Forest greyhounds having arrived, and, contrary to the law of arms, stoutly assailed him. I hope to send you a puppy instead of this redoubtable Cerberus.—Love to Mrs. E.—W. S."

After giving Scott some information about Ritson's literary treasures, most of which, it has turned out, had been disposed of by auction shortly before his death, Mr. Ellis (10th November) returns to the charge about Tristrem and True Thomas. "You appear," he says, "to have been for some time so military that I am afraid the most difficult and important part of your original plan, viz., your History of Scottish Poetry, will again be postponed, and must be kept for some future publication. I am, at this moment, much in want of two such assistants as you and Leyden. It seems to me that if I had some local knowledge of that wicked Ettrick Forest, I could extricate myself tolerably—but as it is, although I am convinced that my general idea is tolerably just, I am unable to guide my elephants in that quiet and decorous step-by-step march which the nature of such animals requires through a country of which I don't know any of the roads. My comfort is, that you cannot publish Tristrem without a preface,—that you can't write one without giving me some assistance,—and that you must finish the said preface long before I go to press with my Introduction."

This was the Introduction to Ellis's "Specimens of Ancient English Romances," in which he intended to prove that as Valentia was, during several ages, the exposed frontier of Roman Britain towards the unsubdued tribes of the North, and as two whole legions were accordingly usually quartered there, while one besides sufficed for the whole southern part of the island, the manners of Valentia, which included the district of Ettrick Forest, must have been greatly favored by the continued residence of so many Roman troops. "It is probable therefore," he says, in another letter, "that the civilization of the northern part became gradually the most perfect. That country gave birth, as

you have observed, to Merlin, and to Aneurin, who was probably the same as the historian Gildas. It seems to have given education to Taliessin—it was the country of Bede and Adonnan."

I shall not quote more on this subject, as the reader may turn to the published essay for Mr. Ellis's matured opinions respecting it. To return to his letter of November 10th, 1803, he proceeds—"And now let me ask you about the Lay of the Last Minstrel. That, I think, may go on as well in your tent, amidst the clang of trumpets and the dust of the field, as in your quiet cottage—perhaps indeed still better—nay, I am not sure whether a *real* invasion would not be, as far as your poetry is concerned, a thing to be wished."

It was in the September of this year that Scott first saw Wordsworth. Their mutual acquaintance, Stoddart, had so often talked of them to each other, that they met as if they had not been strangers; and they parted friends.

Mr. and Miss Wordsworth had just completed that tour in the Highlands, of which so many incidents have since been immortalized, both in the poet's verse and in the hardly less poetical prose of his sister's Diary. On the morning of the 17th of September, having left their carriage at Rosslyn, they walked down the valley to Lasswade, and arrived there before Mr. and Mrs. Scott had risen. "We were received," Mr. Wordsworth has told me, "with that frank cordiality which, under whatever circumstances I afterwards met him, always marked his manners; and, indeed, I found him then in every respect—except, perhaps, that his animal spirits were somewhat higher—precisely the same man that you knew him in later life; the same lively, entertaining conversation, full of anecdote, and averse from disquisition; the same unaffected modesty about himself; the same cheerful, and benevolent, and hopeful views of man and the world. He partly read, and partly recited, sometimes in an enthusiastic style of chant, the first four cantos of the Lay of the Last Minstrel; and the novelty of the manners, the clear, picturesque descriptions, and the easy, glowing energy of much of the verse, greatly delighted me."

After this he walked with the tourists to Rosslyn, and promised to meet them in two days at Melrose. The night before they reached Melrose they slept at the little quiet inn of Clovenford, where, on mentioning his name, they were received with all sorts of attention and kindness,—the landlady observing that Mr. Scott, "who was a very clever gentleman," was an old friend of the house, and usually spent a good deal of time there during the fishing season; but, indeed, says Mr. Wordsworth, "wherever we named him, we found the word acted as an *open sesamum;* and I believe, that in the character of the *Sheriff's* friends, we might have counted on a hearty welcome under any roof in the Border country."

He met them at Melrose on the 19th, and escorted them through the Abbey, pointing out all its beauties, and pouring out his rich stores of history and tradition. They then dined and spent the evening together at the inn; but Miss Wordsworth observed that there was some difficulty about arranging matters for the night, "the landlady refusing to settle any thing until she had ascertained from *the Sheriff himself* that he had no objection to sleep in the same room with *William.*" Scott was thus far on his way to the Circuit Court at Jedburgh, in his capacity of Sheriff, and there his new friends again joined him; but he begged that they would not enter the court, "for," said he, "I really would not like you to see the sort of figure I cut there." They did see him, casually, however, in his cocked hat and sword, marching in the Judge's procession to the sound of one cracked trumpet, and were then not surprised that he should have been a little ashamed of the whole ceremonial. He introduced to them his friend William Laidlaw, who was attending the court as a juryman, and who, having read some of Wordsworth's verses in a newspaper, was exceedingly anxious to be of the party, when they explored at leisure, all the law-business being over, the beautiful valley of the Jed, and the ruins of the Castle of Fernieherst, the original fastness of the noble family of Lothian. The grove of stately ancient elms about and below the ruin was seen to great advantage in a fine, gray,

breezy autumnal afternoon; and Mr. Wordsworth happened to say, "What life there is in trees!"—"How different," said Scott, "was the feeling of a very intelligent young lady, born and bred in the Orkney Islands, who lately came to spend a season in this neighborhood! She told me nothing in the mainland scenery had so much disappointed her as woods and trees. She found them so dead and lifeless, that she could never help pining after the eternal motion and variety of the ocean. And so back she has gone, and I believe nothing will ever tempt her from *the wind-swept Orcades* again."

Next day they all proceeded together up the Teviot to Hawick, Scott entertaining his friends with some legend or ballad connected with every tower or rock they passed. He made them stop for a little to admire particularly a scene of deep and solemn retirement, called *Horne's Pool*, from its having been the daily haunt of a contemplative schoolmaster, known to him in his youth; and at Kirkton, he pointed out the little village school-house, to which his friend Leyden had walked six or eight miles every day across the moors "when a poor barefooted boy." From Hawick, where they spent the night, he led them next morning to the brow of a hill, from which they could see a wide range of the Border Mountains, Ruberslaw, the Carter, and the Cheviots; and lamented that neither their engagements nor his own would permit them to make at this time an excursion into the wilder glens of Liddesdale, "where," said he, "I have strolled so often and so long, that I may say I have a home in every farm-house." "And, indeed," adds Mr. Wordsworth, "wherever we went with him, he seemed to know every body, and every body to know and like him." Here they parted—the Wordsworths to pursue their journey homeward by Eskdale—he to return to Lasswade.

The impression on Mr. Wordsworth's mind was, that on the whole he attached much less importance to his literary labors or reputation than to his bodily sports, exercises, and social amusements; and yet he spoke of his profession as if he had already given up almost all hope of rising by it; and, some allusion being made to its profits, observed that

"he was sure he could, if he chose, get more money than he should ever wish to have from the booksellers."*

This confidence in his own literary resources appeared to Mr. Wordsworth remarkable—the more so from the careless way in which its expression dropped from him. As to his despondence concerning the bar, I confess his *fee-book* indicates much less ground for such a feeling than I should have expected to discover there. His practice brought him, as we have seen, in the session of 1796–7, £144, 10s.: its proceeds fell down, in the first year of his married life, to £79, 17s.; but they rose again in 1798–9, to £135, 9s.; amounted in 1799–1800, to £129, 13s.—in 1800–1, to £170—in 1801–2, to £202, 12s.—and in the session that had just elapsed, (which is the last included in the record before me,) to £228, 18s.

On reaching his cottage in Westmoreland, Wordsworth addressed a letter to Scott, from which I must quote a few sentences. It is dated Grasmere, October 16, 1803.

"We had a delightful journey home, delightful weather, and a sweet country to travel through. We reached our little cottage in high spirits, and thankful to God for all his bounties. My wife and child were both well, and as I need not say, we had all of us a happy meeting. . . . . We passed Branxholme—your Branxholme, we supposed—about four miles on this side of Hawick. It looks better in your poem than in its present realities. The situation, however, is delightful, and makes amends for an ordinary mansion. The whole of the Teviot and the pastoral steeps about Mosspaul pleased us exceedingly. The Esk below Langholme is a delicious river, and we saw it to great advantage. We did not omit noticing Johnnie Armstrong's keep; but his hanging place, to our great regret, we missed. We were, indeed, most truly sorry that we could not have you along with us into Westmoreland. The country was in its full glory—the verdure of the valleys, in which we are so much superior to you in Scotland, but little tarnished by the weather, and the trees putting on their most beautiful looks. My sister was quite enchanted, and we often said to each other, What a pity Mr. Scott is not with us! . . . I had the pleasure of seeing Coleridge and Southey at Keswick last Sunday. Southey, whom I never saw much of before, I liked much: he is very pleasant in his manner, and a man of great reading in old books, poetry,

* I have drawn up the account of this meeting from my recollection partly of Mr. Wordsworth's conversation—partly from that of his sister's charming "Diary," which he was so kind as to read over to me on the 16th May, 1836

chronicles, memoirs, &c. &c., particularly Spanish and Portuguese. . . . . My sister and I often talk of the happy days that we spent in your company. Such things do not occur often in life. If we live, we shall meet again; that is my consolation when I think of these things. Scotland and England sound like division, do what ye can; but we really are but neighbors, and if you were no farther off, and in Yorkshire, we should think so. Farewell. God prosper you, and all that belongs to you. Your sincere friend, for such I will call myself, though slow to use a word of such solemn meaning to any one,

W. Wordsworth."

The poet then transcribes his noble sonnet on Neidpath Castle, of which Scott had, it seems, requested a copy. In the MS. it stands somewhat differently from the printed edition; but in that original shape Scott always recited it, and few lines in the language were more frequently in his mouth.

I have already said something of the beginning of Scott's acquaintance with "the Ettrick Shepherd." Shortly after their first meeting, Hogg, coming into Edinburgh with a flock of sheep, was seized with a sudden ambition of seeing himself in print, and he wrote out that same night "Willie and Katie," and a few other ballads already famous in the Forest, which some obscure bookseller gratified him by putting forth accordingly; but they appear to have attracted no notice beyond their original sphere. Hogg then made an excursion into the Highlands, in quest of employment as overseer of some extensive sheep-farm; but, though Scott had furnished him with strong recommendations to various friends, he returned without success. He printed an account of his travels, however, in a set of letters in the Scots' Magazine, which, though exceedingly rugged and uncouth, had abundant traces of the native shrewdness and genuine poetical feeling of this remarkable man. These also failed to excite attention; but, undeterred by such disappointments, the Shepherd no sooner read the third volume of the "Minstrelsy," than he made up his mind that the Editor's "Imitations of the Ancients" were by no means what they should have been. "Immediately," he says, in one of his many Memoirs of himself, "I chose a number of traditional facts, and set about imitating the manner of

the Ancients myself." These imitations he transmitted to Scott, who warmly praised the many striking beauties scattered over their rough surface. The next time that Hogg's business carried him to Edinburgh, he waited upon Scott, who invited him to dinner in Castle Street, in company with William Laidlaw, who happened also to be in town, and some other admirers of the rustic genius. When Hogg entered the drawing-room, Mrs. Scott, being at the time in a delicate state of health, was reclining on a sofa. The Shepherd, after being presented, and making his best bow, forthwith took possession of another sofa placed opposite to hers, and stretched himself thereupon at all his length; for, as he said afterwards, "I thought I could never do wrong to copy the lady of the house." As his dress at this period was precisely that in which any ordinary herdsman attends cattle to the market, and as his hands, moreover, bore most legible marks of a recent sheep-smearing, the lady of the house did not observe with perfect equanimity the novel usage to which her chintz was exposed. The Shepherd, however, remarked nothing of all this—dined heartily and drank freely, and, by jest, anecdote, and song, afforded plentiful merriment to the more civilized part of the company. As the liquor operated, his familiarity increased and strengthened; from "Mr. Scott," he advanced to "Sherra," and thence to "Scott," "Walter," and "Wattie," until, at supper, he fairly convulsed the whole party by addressing Mrs. Scott as "Charlotte."

The collection entitled "The Mountain Bard" was eventually published by Constable, in consequence of Scott's recommendation, and this work did at last afford Hogg no slender share of the popular reputation for which he had so long thirsted. It is not my business, however, to pursue the details of his story. What I have written was only to render intelligible the following letter:—

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Advocate, Castle Street, Edinburgh.*

"Ettrick-House, December 24, 1803

"Dear Mr. Scott,

"I have been very impatient to hear from you. There is a certain affair of which you and I talked a little in private, and which must now be concluded, that naturally increaseth this.

"I am afraid that I was at least half-seas-over the night I was with you, for I cannot, for my life, recollect what passed when it was late; and, there being certainly a small vacuum in my brain, which, when empty, is quite empty, but is sometimes supplied with a small distillation of intellectual matter—this must have been empty that night, or it never could have been taken possession of by the fumes of the liquor so easily. If I was in the state in which I suspect that I was, I must have spoke a very great deal of nonsense, for which I beg ten thousand pardons. I have the consolation, however, of remembering that Mrs. Scott kept in company all or most of the time, which she certainly could not have done, had I been very rude. I remember, too, of the filial injunction you gave at parting, cautioning me against being ensnared by the loose women in town. I am sure I had not reason enough left at that time to express either the half of my gratitude for the kind hint, or the utter abhorrence I inherit at those seminaries of lewdness.

"You once promised me your best advice in the first lawsuit in which I had the particular happiness of being engaged. I am now going to ask it seriously in an affair, in which, I am sure, we will both take as much pleasure. It is this:—I have as many songs beside me, which are certainly the *worst* of my productions, as will make about one hundred pages close printed, and about two hundred printed as the Minstrelsy is. Now, although I will not proceed without your consent and advice, yet I would have you to understand that I expect it, and have the scheme much at heart at present. The first thing that suggested it, was their extraordinary repute in Ettrick and its neighborhood, and being everlastingly plagued with writing copies, and promising scores which I never meant to perform. As my last pamphlet was never known, save to a few friends, I wish your advice what pieces of it are worth preserving. The 'Pastoral' I am resolved to insert, as I am 'Sandy Tod.' As to my manuscripts, they are endless; and as I doubt you will disapprove of publishing them wholesale, and letting the good help off the bad, I think you must trust to my discretion in the selection of a few. I wish likewise to know if you think a graven image on the first leaf is any recommendation; and if we might front the songs with a letter to you, giving an impartial account of my manner of life and education, and, which if you pleased to transcribe, putting He for I. Again, there is no publishing a book without a patron, and I have one or two in my eye, and of which I will, with my wonted assurance to you, give you the most free choice. The first is Walter Scott, Esq., Advocate, Sheriff-depute of Ettrick Forest, which, if permitted, I will address you in a dedication singular enough. The next is Lady Dalkeith, which, if you approved of, you must become the Editor yourself; and I shall give you my word for it, that neither word nor sentiment in it shall offend the most delicate ear. You will not be in the least jealous, if, alongst with my services to you, I present

my kindest compliments to the sweet little lady whom you call Charlotte. As for Camp and Walter, (I beg pardon for this pre-eminence,) they will not mind them if I should exhaust my eloquence in compliments. Believe me, dear Walter, your most devoted servant,

JAMES HOGG."

The reader will, I doubt not, be particularly amused with one of the suggestions in this letter; namely, that Scott should transcribe the Shepherd's narrative *in fore* of his life and education, and, merely putting "He," for "I," adopt it as his own composition. James, however, would have had no hesitation about offering a similar suggestion either to Scott, or Wordsworth, or Byron, at any period of their renown. To say nothing about modesty, his notions of literary honesty were always exceedingly loose; but, at the same time, we must take into account his peculiar notions, or rather no notions, as to the proper limits of a joke.

Literature, like misery, makes men acquainted with strange bed-fellows. Let us return from the worthy Shepherd of Ettrick to the courtly wit and scholar of Sunninghill. In the last quoted of his letters, he expresses his fear that Scott's military avocations might cause him to publish the Tristrem unaccompanied by his "Essay on the History of Scottish Poetry." It is needless to add, that no such Essay ever was completed; but I have heard Scott say that his plan had been to begin with the age of Thomas of Ercildoune, and bring the subject down to his own, illustrating each stage of his progress by a specimen of verse imitating every great master's style, as he had done that of the original Sir Tristrem in his "*Conclusion.*" Such a series of pieces from his hand would have been invaluable, merely as bringing out in a clear manner the *gradual* divarication of the two great dialects of the English tongue; but seeing by his "Verses on a Poacher," written many years after this, in professed imitation of Crabbe, with what happy art he could pour the poetry of his own mind into the mould of another artist, it is impossible to doubt that we have lost better things than antiquarian illumination by the non-completion of a design in which he should have embraced

successively the tone and measure of Douglas, Dunbar, Lindesay, Montgomerie, Hamilton, Ramsay, Ferguson, and Burns.

The "Tristrem" was now far advanced at press. He says to Ellis, on the 19th March, 1804:—

"As I had a world of things to say to you, I have been culpably, but most naturally, silent. When you turn a bottle with its head downmost, you must have remarked that the extreme impatience of the contents to get out all at once, greatly impedes their getting out at all. I have, however, been forming the resolution of sending a grand packet with Sir Tristrem, who will kiss your hands in about a fortnight. I intend uncastrated copies for you, Heber, and Mr. Douce, who, I am willing to hope, will accept this mark of my great respect and warm remembrance of his kindness while in London. Pray send me, without delay, the passage referring to *Thomas* in the French 'Hornchild.' Far from being daunted with the position of the enemy, I am resolved to carry it at the point of the bayonet, and, like an able general, to attack where it would be difficult to defend. Without metaphor or parable, I am determined not only that my Tomas *shall* be the author of 'Tristrem,' but that he shall be the author of 'Hornchild' also. I must, however, read over the romance before I can make my arrangements. Holding, with Ritson, that the copy in *his* collection is translated from the French, I do not see why we should not suppose that the French had been originally a version from our Thomas. The date does not greatly frighten me, as I have extended Thomas of Erceldoune's life to the threescore and ten years of the Psalmist, and consequently removed back the date of "Sir Tristrem" to 1250. The French translation might be written, for that matter, within a few days after Thomas's work was completed—and I can allow a few years. He lived on the Border, already possessed by Norman families, and in the vicinity of Northumberland, where there were many more. Do you think the minstrels of the Percies, the Vescies, the Morells, the Grais, and the De Vaux, were not acquainted with honest Thomas, their next door neighbor, who was a poet, and wrote excellent tales—and moreover a *laird*, and gave, I dare be sworn, good dinners? And would they not anxiously translate for the amusement of their masters a story like 'Hornchild,' so intimately connected with the lands in which they had settled? And do you not think, from the whole structure of 'Hornchild,' however often translated and retranslated, that it must have been originally of northern extraction? I have not time to tell you certain suspicions I entertain that Mr. Douce's fragments are the work of one Raoull de Beauvais, who flourished about the middle of the thirteenth century, and for whose accommodation principally I have made Thomas, to use a military phrase, *dress backwards* for ten years."

All this playful language is exquisitely characteristic of Scott's indomitable adherence to his own views. But his making *Thomas dress backwards*—and resolving that, if necessary, he *shall be* the author of Hornchild as well as Sir Tristrem—may perhaps remind the reader of Don Quixote's method of repairing the headpiece which, as originally constructed, one blow had sufficed to demolish: —"Not altogether approving of his having broken it to pieces with so much ease, to secure himself from the like danger for the future, he made it over again, fencing it with small bars of iron within, in such a manner that *he rested satisfied of its strength—and without caring to make a fresh experiment on it, he approved and looked upon it as a most excellent helmet.*"

Ellis having made some observations on Scott's article upon Godwin's Life of Chaucer, which implied a notion that he had formed a regular connection with the Edinburgh Review, he, in the same letter, says:—

"I quite agree with you as to the general conduct of the Review, which savors more of a wish to display than to instruct; but as essays, many of the articles are invaluable, and the principal conductor is a man of very acute and universal talent. I am not regularly connected with the work, nor have I either inclination or talents to use the critical scalping-knife, unless as in the case of Godwin, where flesh and blood succumbed under the temptation. I don't know if you have looked into his tomes, of which a whole edition has vanished, I was at a loss to know how, till I conjectured that as the heaviest materials to be come at, they have been sent on the secret expedition planned by Mr. Phillips, and adopted by our sapient Government, for blocking up the mouth of our enemy's harbors. They should have had my free consent to take Phillips and Godwin, and all our other lumber, literary and political, for the same beneficial purpose. But, in general, I think it ungentlemanly to wound any person's feelings through an anonymous publication, unless where conceit or false doctrine calls for reprobation. Where praise can be conscientiously mingled in a larger proportion than blame, there is always some amusement in throwing together our ideas upon the works of our fellow-laborers, and no injustice in publishing them. On such occasions, *and in our way*, I may possibly, once or twice a-year, furnish my critical friends with an article."

"Sir Tristrem" was at length published, on the 2d of May, 1804, by Constable, who, however, expected so little

popularity for the work that the edition consisted only of 150 copies. These were sold at a high price, (two guineas;) otherwise they would not have been enough to cover the expenses of paper and printing. Mr. Ellis, and Scott's other antiquarian friends, were much dissatisfied with these arrangements; but I doubt not that Constable was a better judge than any of them. The work, however, partook in due time of the favor attending its editor's name. In 1806, 750 copies were called for; and 1000 in 1811. After that time, Sir Tristrem was included in the collective editions of Scott's poetry; but he had never parted with the copy-right, merely allowing his general publishers to insert it among his other works, whenever they chose to do so, as a matter of courtesy. It was not a performance from which he had ever anticipated any pecuniary profit, but it maintained, at least, if it did not raise his reputation in the circle of his fellow antiquaries; and his own *Conclusion*, in the manner of the original romance, must always be admired as a remarkable specimen of skill and dexterity.

As to the arguments of the Introduction, I shall not in this place attempt any discussion.* Whether the story of Tristrem was first told in Welsh, Armorican, French, or English verse, there can, I think, be no doubt that it had been told in verse, with such success as to obtain very general renown, by Thomas of Ercildoune, and that the copy edited by Scott was either the composition of one who had heard the old Rhymer recite his lay, or the identical lay itself. The introduction of Thomas's name in the third person, as not the author, but the author's authority, appears to have had a great share in convincing Scott that the Auchinleck MS. contained not the original, but the copy of an English admirer and contemporary. This point seems to have been rendered more doubtful by some quotations in the recent edition of Warton's History of English

* The critical reader will find all the learning on the subject brought together with much ability in the Preface to "The Poetical Romances of Tristan, in French, in Anglo-Norman, and in Greek, composed in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries—Edited by Francisque Michel," 2 vols. London, 1835.

Poetry; but the argument derived from the enthusiastic exclamation, "God help Sir Tristrem the knight—he fought for England," still remains; and stronger, perhaps, even than that, in the opinion of modern philologists, is the total absence of any Scottish or even Northumbrian peculiarities in the diction.

All this controversy may be waived here. Scott's object and delight was to revive the fame of the Rhymer, whose traditional history he had listened to, while yet an infant, among the crags of Smailholme. He had already celebrated him in a noble ballad;* he now devoted a volume to elucidate a fragment supposed to be substantially his work; and we shall find that, thirty years after, when the lamp of his own genius was all but spent, it could still revive, and throw out at least some glimmerings of its original brightness, at the name of Thomas of Ercildoune.

CHAPTER II.

REMOVAL TO ASHESTIEL—DEATH OF CAPTAIN ROBERT SCOTT—MUNGO PARK—COMPLETION AND PUBLICATION OF THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL—1804–1805.

It has been mentioned that, in the course of the preceding summer, the Lord-Lieutenant of Selkirkshire complained of Scott's military zeal as interfering sometimes with the discharge of his shrieval functions, and took occasion to remind him, that the law, requiring every Sheriff to reside at least four months in the year within his own jurisdiction, had not hitherto been complied with. It appears that Scott received this communication with some displeasure, being conscious that no duty of any importance had ever been neglected by him; well knowing that the law of

* See the Minstrelsy, (Edition 1833,) vol. iv. p. 110.

residence was not enforced in the cases of many of his brother sheriffs; and, in fact, ascribing his Lord-Lieutenant's complaint to nothing but a certain nervous fidget as to all points of form, for which that respectable nobleman was notorious, as well became, perhaps, an old Lord of the Bedchamber, and High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Kirk.* Scott, however, must have been found so clearly in the wrong, had the case been submitted to the Secretary of State, and Lord Napier conducted the correspondence with such courtesy, never failing to allege as a chief argument the pleasure which it would afford himself and the other gentlemen of Selkirkshire to have more of their Sheriff's society, that, while it would have been highly imprudent to persist, there could be no mortification in yielding. He flattered himself that his active habits would enable him to maintain his connection with the Edinburgh Cavalry as usual; and perhaps he also flattered himself that residing for the summer in Selkirkshire would not interfere more seriously with his business as a barrister than the occupation of the cottage at Lasswade had hitherto done.

While he was seeking about, accordingly, for some "lodge in the Forest," his kinsman of Harden suggested that the tower of Auld Wat might be refitted so as to serve his purpose; and he received the proposal with enthusiastic delight. On a more careful inspection of the localities, however, he became sensible that he would be practically at a greater distance from county business of all kinds at Harden, than if he were to continue at Lasswade. Just at this time, the house of Ashestiel, situated on the southern bank of the Tweed, a few miles from Selkirk, became va-

* I remember being much amused with an instance of Lord Napier's precision in small matters, mentioned by the late Lady Stewart of Castlemilk, in Lanarkshire. Lord and Lady Napier had arrived at Castlemilk, with the intention of staying a week; but next morning it was announced that a circumstance had occurred which rendered it indispensable for them to return, without delay, to their own seat in Selkirkshire. It was impossible for Lady Stewart to extract any further explanation at the moment; but it turned out afterwards, that Lord Napier's valet had committed the grievous mistake of packing up a set of neckcloths which did not correspond, *in point of date*, with the shirts they accompanied.

cant by the death of its proprietor, Colonel Russell, who had married a sister of Scott's mother, and the consequent dispersion of the family. The young laird of Ashestiel, his cousin, was then in India; and the Sheriff took a lease of the house and grounds, with a small farm adjoining. On the 4th May, two days after the Tristrem had been published, he says to Ellis, "I have been engaged in travelling backwards and forwards to Selkirkshire upon little pieces of business, just important enough to prevent my doing any thing to purpose. One great matter, however, I have achieved, which is, procuring myself a place of residence, which will save me these teasing migrations in future; so that, though I part with my sweet little cottage on the banks of the Esk, you will find me this summer in the very centre of the ancient Reged, in a decent farm-house overhanging the Tweed, and situated in a wild, pastoral country." And again, on the 19th, he thus apologizes for not having answered a letter of the 10th:—"For more than a month, my head was fairly tenanted by ideas, which, though strictly pastoral and rural, were neither literary nor poetical. *Long sheep*, and *short sheep*, and *tups*, and *gimmers*, and *hogs*, and *dinmonts*, had made a perfect sheepfold of my understanding, which is hardly yet cleared of them.*—I hope Mrs. Ellis will clap a bridle on her imagi-

* Describing his meeting with Scott in the summer of 1801, James Hogg says:—"During the sociality of the evening, the discourse ran very much on the different breeds of sheep, that curse of the community of Ettrick Forest. The original black-faced Forest breed being always called *the short sheep*, and the Cheviot breed *the long sheep*, the disputes at that period ran very high about the practicable profits of each. Mr. Scott, who had come into that remote district to preserve what fragments remained of its legendary lore, was rather bored with everlasting questions of the long and the short sheep. So at length, putting on his most serious, calculating face, he turned to Mr. Walter Bryden, and said, 'I am rather at a loss regarding the merits of this *very* important question. How long must a sheep actually measure to come under the denomination of *a long sheep?*' Mr. Bryden, who, in the simplicity of his heart, neither perceived the quiz nor the reproof, fell to answer with great sincerity. 'It's the woo', [wool,] sir—it's the woo' that makes the difference. The lang sheep ha'e the short woo', and the short sheep ha'e the lang thing, and these are just kind o' names we gi'e them like.' Mr. Scott could not preserve his grave face of strict calculation; it went gradually awry, and a hearty guffaw

nation. Ettrick Forest boasts finely-shaped hills, and clear, romantic streams; but, alas! they are bare to wildness, and denuded of the beautiful natural wood with which they were formerly shaded. It is mortifying to see that, though, wherever the sheep are excluded, the copse has immediately sprung up in abundance, so that enclosures only are wanting to restore the wood wherever it might be useful or ornamental, yet hardly a proprietor has attempted to give it fair play for a resurrection. . . . . You see we reckon positively on you—the more because our arch-critic Jeffrey tells me that he met you in London, and found you still inclined for a northern trip. All our wise men in the north are rejoiced at the prospect of seeing George Ellis. If you delay your journey till July, I shall then be free of the Courts of Law, and will meet you upon the Border, at whatever side you enter."

The business part of these letters refers to Scott's brother Daniel, who, as he expresses it, "having been bred to the mercantile line, had been obliged, by some untoward circumstances, particularly an imprudent connection with an artful woman, to leave Edinburgh for Liverpool, and now to be casting his eyes towards Jamaica." Scott requests Ellis to help him if he can, by introducing him to some of his own friends or agents in that island; and Ellis furnishes him accordingly with letters to Mr. Blackburne, a friend and brother proprietor, who appears to have paid Daniel Scott every possible attention, and soon provided him with suitable employment on a healthy part of his estates. But the same low tastes and habits which had reduced the unfortunate young man to the necessity of expatriating himself, recurred after a brief season of penitence and order, and continued until he had accumulated great affliction upon all his family.

On the 10th of June, 1804, died, at his seat of Rose-

"[*i. e.* horselaugh]" followed. When I saw the very same words repeated near the beginning (p. 4) of the 'Black Dwarf,' how could I be mistaken of the author?"—*Autobiography* prefixed to Hogg's Altrive Tales.

bank, Captain Robert Scott, the affectionate uncle whose name has often occurred in this narrative.*

"He was" (says his nephew to Ellis, on the 18th) "a man of universal benevolence, and great kindness towards his friends, and to me individually. His manners were so much tinged with the habits of celibacy as to render them peculiar, though by no means unpleasingly so, and his profession (that of a seaman) gave a high coloring to the whole. The loss is one which, though the course of nature led me to expect it, did not take place at last without considerable pain to my feelings. The arrangement of his affairs, and the distribution of his small fortune among his relations, will devolve in a great measure upon me. He has distinguished me by leaving me a beautiful little villa on the banks of the Tweed, with every possible convenience annexed to it, and about thirty acres of the finest land in Scotland. Notwithstanding, however, the temptation that this bequest offers, I continue to pursue my Reged plan, and expect to be settled at Ashestiel in the course of a month. Rosebank is situated so near the village of Kelso as hardly to be sufficiently a country residence; besides, it is hemmed in by hedges and ditches, not to mention Dukes and Lady Dowagers, which are bad things for little people. It is expected to sell to great advantage. I shall buy a mountain farm with the purchase-money, and be quite the Laird of the Cairn and the Scaur."

Scott sold Rosebank in the course of the year for £5000; his share (being a ninth) of his uncle's other property amounted, I believe, to about £500; and he had besides a legacy of £100 in his quality of trustee. This bequest made an important change in his pecuniary position, and influenced accordingly the arrangements of his future life. Independently of practice at the bar, and of literary profits, he was now, with his little patrimony, his Sheriffship, and about £200 per annum arising from the stock ultimately settled on his wife, in possession of a fixed revenue of nearly, if not quite, £1000 a year.

On the 1st of August, he writes to Ellis from Ashestiel—

"Having had only about a hundred and fifty things to do, I have

* In the obituary of the Scots' Magazine for this month I find:—"Universally regretted, Captain Robert Scott of Rosebank, a gentleman whose life afforded an uniform example of unostentatious charity and extensive benevolence."

scarcely done any thing, and yet could not give myself leave to suppose that I had leisure to write letters. 1st, I had this farm-house to furnish from sales, from broker's shops, and from all manner of hospitals for incurable furniture. 2dly, I had to let my cottage on the banks of the Esk. 3dly, I had to arrange matters for the sale of Rosebank. 4thly, I had to go into quarters with our cavalry, which made a very idle fortnight in the midst of all this business. Last of all, I had to superintend a removal, or what we call a *flitting*, which, of all bores under the cope of heaven, is bore the most tremendous. After all these storms, we are now most comfortably settled, and have only to regret deeply our disappointment at finding your northern march blown up. We had been projecting about twenty expeditions, and were pleasing ourselves at Mrs. Ellis's expected surprise on finding herself so totally built in by mountains, as I am at the present writing hereof. We are seven miles from kirk and market. We rectify the last inconvenience by killing our own mutton and poultry; and, as to the former, finding there was some chance of my family turning pagans, I have adopted the goodly practice of reading prayers every Sunday, to the great edification of my household. Think of this, you that have the happiness to be within two steps of the church, and commiserate those who dwell in the wilderness. I showed Charlotte yesterday *the Catrail*, and told her that to inspect that venerable monument was one main object of your intended journey to Scotland. She is of opinion that ditches must be more scarce in the neighborhood of Windsor Forest than she had hitherto had the least idea of."

Ashestiel will be visited by many for his sake, as long as Waverley and Marmion are remembered. A more beautiful situation for the residence of a poet could not be conceived. The house was then a small one, but, compared with the cottage at Lasswade, its accommodations were amply sufficient. You approached it through an old-fashioned garden, with holly hedges, and broad, green terrace walks. On one side, close under the windows, is a deep ravine, clothed with venerable trees, down which a mountain rivulet is heard, more than seen, in its progress to the Tweed. The river itself is separated from the high bank on which the house stands only by a narrow meadow of the richest verdure. Opposite, and all around, are the green hills. The valley there is narrow, and the aspect in every direction is that of perfect pastoral repose. The heights immediately behind are those which divide the Tweed from the

Yarrow, and the latter celebrated stream lies within an easy ride, in the course of which the traveller passes through a variety of the finest mountain scenery in the south of Scotland. No town is within seven miles, but Selkirk, which was then still smaller and quieter than it is now; there was hardly even a gentleman's family within visiting distance, except at Yair, a few miles lower on the Tweed, the ancient seat of the Pringles of Whytbank, and at Bowhill, between the Yarrow and the Ettrick, where the Earl of Dalkeith used occasionally to inhabit a small shooting lodge, which has since grown to be a magnificent ducal residence. The country all around, with here and there an insignificant exception, belongs to the Buccleuch estate: so that, whichever way he chose to turn, the bard of the clan had ample room and verge enough, and all appliances to boot, for every variety of field sport that might happen to please his fancy; and being then in the prime vigor of manhood, he was not slow to profit by these advantages. Mean time, the concerns of his own little farm, and the care of his absent relation's woods, gave him healthful occupation in the intervals of the chase; and he had long, solitary evenings for the uninterrupted exercise of his pen; perhaps, on the whole, better opportunities of study than he had ever enjoyed before, or was to meet with elsewhere in later days.

When he first examined Ashestiel, with a view to being his cousin's tenant, he thought of taking home James Hogg to superintend the sheep-farm, and keep watch over the house also during the winter. I am not able to tell in what manner this proposal fell to the ground. In January, 1804, the Shepherd writes to him:—

"I have no intention of waiting for so distant a prospect as that of being manager of your farm, though I have no doubt of our joint endeavor proving successful, nor yet of your willingness to employ me in that capacity. His Grace, the Duke of Buccleuch, hath at present a farm vacant in Eskdale, and I have been importuned by friends to get a letter from you and apply for it. You can hardly be conscious what importance your protection hath given me already, not only in mine own eyes, but even in those of others. You might write to him, or to any of the family you are best acquainted with, stating that such and such a character

was about leaving his native country for want of a residence in the farming line."

I am very doubtful if Scott—however willing to encounter the risk of employing Hogg as his own *grieve*, or bailiff—would have felt himself justified at this, or, indeed, at any time, in recommending him, as the tenant of a considerable farm on the Duke of Buccleuch's estate. But I am also quite at a loss to comprehend how Hogg should have conceived it possible, at this period, when he certainly had no capital whatever, that the Duke's chamberlain should agree to accept him for a tenant, on any attestation, however strong, as to the excellence of his character and intentions. Be that as it may, if Scott made the application which the Shepherd suggested, it failed. So did a negotiation which he certainly did enter upon about the same time with the late Earl of Caernarvon, (then Lord Porchester,) through that nobleman's aunt, Mrs. Scott of Harden, with the view of obtaining for Hogg the situation of bailiff on one of his Lordship's estates in the west of England; and such, I believe, was the result of several other attempts of the same kind with landed proprietors nearer home. Perhaps the Shepherd had already set his heart so much on taking rank as a farmer in his own district, that he witnessed the failure of any such negotiations with indifference. As regards the management of Ashestiel, I find no trace of that proposal having ever been renewed.

In truth, Scott had hardly been a week in possession of his new domains, before he made acquaintance with a character much better suited to his purpose than James Hogg ever could have been. I mean honest Thomas Purdie, his faithful servant—his affectionately devoted humble friend from this time until death parted them. Tom was first brought before him in his capacity of Sheriff, on a charge of poaching, when the poor fellow gave such a touching account of his circumstances,—a wife, and I know not how many children depending on his exertions—work scarce and grouse abundant,—and all this with a mixture of odd, sly humor,—that the Sheriff's heart was moved. Tom escaped the penalty of the law—was taken into em

ployment as shepherd, and showed such zeal, activity, and shrewdness in that capacity, that Scott never had occasion to repent of the step he soon afterwards took, in promoting him to the position which had been originally offered to James Hogg.

It was also about the same time that he took into his service as coachman Peter Mathieson, brother-in-law to Thomas Purdie, another faithful servant, who never afterwards left him, and still survives his kind master. Scott's awkward conduct of the little phaeton had exposed his wife to more than one perilous overturn, before he agreed to set up a close carriage, and call in the assistance of this steady charioteer.

During this autumn Scott formed the personal acquaintance of Mungo Park, the celebrated victim of African discovery. On his return from his first expedition, Park endeavored to establish himself as a medical practitioner in the town of Hawick; but the drudgeries of that calling in such a district soon exhausted his ardent temper, and he was now living in seclusion in his native cottage at Fowlsheils on the Yarrow, nearly opposite Newark Castle. His brother, Archibald Park, a man remarkable for strength both of mind and body, was the sheriff's-officer of that district, and introduced the traveller to his principal. They soon became much attached to each other; and Scott supplied some interesting anecdotes of their brief intercourse to the late Mr. Wishaw, the editor of Park's posthumous Journal, with which I shall blend a few minor circumstances which I gathered from him in conversation long afterwards. "On one occasion," he says, "the traveller communicated to him some very remarkable adventures which had befallen him in Africa, but which he had not recorded in his book." On Scott's asking the cause of this silence, Mungo answered, "that in all cases where he had information to communicate, which he thought of importance to the public, he had stated the facts boldly, leaving it to his readers to give such credit to his statements as they might appear justly to deserve; but that he would not shock their faith, or render his travels more marvellous, by

introducing circumstances, which, however true, were of little or no moment, as they related solely to his own personal adventures and escapes." This reply struck Scott as highly characteristic of the man; and though strongly tempted to set down some of these marvels for Mr. Wishaw's use, he on reflection abstained from doing so, holding it unfair to record what the adventurer had deliberately chosen to suppress in his own narrative. He confirms the account given by Park's biographer of his cold and reserved manners to strangers, and, in particular, of his disgust with the *indirect* questions which curious visitors would often put to him upon the subject of his travels. "This practice," said Mungo, "exposes me to two risks; either that I may not understand the questions meant to be put, or that my answers to them may be misconstrued;" and he contrasted such conduct with the frankness of Scott's revered friend, Dr. Adam Ferguson, who, the very first day the traveller dined with him at Hallyards, spread a large map of Africa on the table, and made him trace out his progress thereupon, inch by inch, questioning him minutely as to every step he had taken. "Here, however," says Scott, "Dr. F. was using a privilege to which he was well entitled by his venerable age and high literary character, but which could not have been exercised with propriety by any common stranger."

Calling one day at Fowlsheils, and not finding Park at home, Scott walked in search of him along the banks of the Yarrow, which in that neighborhood passes over various ledges of rock, forming deep pools and eddies between them. Presently he discovered his friend standing alone on the bank, plunging one stone after another into the water, and watching anxiously the bubbles as they rose to the surface. "This," said Scott, "appears but an idle amusement for one who has seen so much stirring adventure." "Not so idle, perhaps, as you suppose," answered Mungo. "This was the manner in which I used to ascertain the depth of a river in Africa before I ventured to cross it—judging whether the attempt would be safe, by the time the bubbles of air took to ascend." At this time Park's intention of a second expedition had never been revealed to Scott; but he in-

stantly formed the opinion that these experiments on Yarrow were connected with some such purpose.

His thoughts had always continued to be haunted with Africa. He told Scott that whenever he awoke suddenly in the night, owing to a nervous disorder with which he was troubled, he fancied himself still a prisoner in the tent of Ali; but when the poet expressed some surprise that he should design again to revisit those scenes, he answered, that he would rather brave Africa and all its horrors, than wear out his life in long and toilsome rides over the hills of Scotland, for which the remuneration was hardly enough to keep soul and body together.

Towards the end of the autumn, when about to quit his country for the last time, Park paid Scott a farewell visit, and slept at Ashestiel. Next morning his host accompanied him homewards over the wild chain of hills between the Tweed and the Yarrow. Park talked much of his new scheme, and mentioned his determination to tell his family that he had some business for a day or two in Edinburgh, and send them his blessing from thence without returning to take leave. He had married, not long before, a pretty and amiable woman; and when they reached the *Williamhope Ridge*, "the autumnal mist floating heavily and slowly down the valley of the Yarrow," presented to Scott's imagination "a striking emblem of the troubled and uncertain prospect which his undertaking afforded." He remained, however, unshaken, and at length they reached the spot at which they had agreed to separate. A small ditch divided the moor from the road, and, in going over it, Park's horse stumbled, and nearly fell. "I am afraid, Mungo," said the Sheriff, "that is a bad omen." To which he answered, smiling, "*Freits* (omens) follow those who look to them." With this expression Mungo struck the spurs into his horse, and Scott never saw him again. His parting proverb, by the way, was probably suggested by one of the Border ballads, in which species of lore he was almost as great a proficient as the Sheriff himself; for we read in "Edom o Gordon,"—

> "Them look to freits, my master dear,
> Then freits will follow them."

I must not omit that George Scott, the unfortunate companion of Park's second journey, was the son of a tenant on the Buccleuch estate, whose skill in drawing having casually attracted the Sheriff's attention, he was recommended by him to the protection of the family, and by this means established in a respectable situation in the Ordnance department of the Tower of London; but the stories of his old acquaintance Mungo Park's discoveries, had made such an impression on his fancy, that nothing could prevent his accompanying him on the fatal expedition of 1805.

The brother of Mungo Park remained in Scott's employment for many years, and was frequently his companion in his mountain rides. Though a man of the most dauntless temperament, he was often alarmed at Scott's reckless horsemanship. "The de'il's in ye, Sherra," he would say; "ye'll never halt till they bring you hame with your feet foremost." He rose greatly in favor, in consequence of the gallantry with which he seized a gypsy, accused of murder, from amidst a group of similar desperadoes, on whom the Sheriff and he had come unexpectedly in a desolate part of the country.

To return to the Lay of the Last Minstrel:—Ellis, understanding it to be now nearly ready for the press, writes to Scott, urging him to set it forth with some engraved illustrations—if possible, after Flaxman, whose splendid designs from Homer had shortly before made their appearance. He answers, August 21—

"I should have liked very much to have had appropriate embellishments. Indeed, we made some attempts of the kind, but they did not succeed. I should fear Flaxman's genius is too classic to stoop to body forth my Gothic Borderers. Would there not be some risk of their resembling the antique of Homer's heroes rather than the iron race of Salvator? After all, perhaps, nothing is more difficult than for a painter to adopt the author's ideas of an imaginary character, especially when it is founded on traditions to which the artist is a stranger. I should like at least to be at his elbow when at work. I wish very much I could have sent you the Lay while in MS., to have had the advantage of your opinion and corrections. But Ballantyne galled my kibes so severely during an unusual fit of activity, that I gave him the whole story in a sort of pet both with him and with it. . . . . I have lighted upon a very

good amanuensis for copying such matters as the *Lay le Frain*, &c. He was sent down here by some of the London booksellers in a half-starved state, but begins to pick up a little. . . I am just about to set out on a grand expedition of great importance to my comfort in this place. You must know that Mr. Plummer, my predecessor in this county, was a good antiquary, and left a valuable collection of books, which he entailed with the estate, the first successors being three of his sisters, at least as old and musty as any Caxton or Wynkyn de Worde in his library. Now I must contrive to coax those watchful dragons to give me admittance into this garden of the Hesperides. I suppose they trouble the volumes as little as *the* dragon did the golden pippins; but they may not be the more easily soothed on that account. However, I set out on my *quest*, like a *preux chevalier*, taking care to leave Camp, for dirtying the carpet, and to carry the greyhounds with me, whose appearance will indicate that hare soup may be forthcoming in due season. By the way, did I tell you that Fitz-Camp is dead, and another on the stocks? As our stupid postman might mistake *Reged*, address, as per date, Ashestiel, Selkirk, by Berwick."

I believe the spinsters of Sunderland hall proved very generous dragons; and Scott lived to see them succeeded in the guardianship of Mr. Plummer's literary treasures by an amiable young gentleman of his own name and family. The half-starved amanuensis of this letter was *Henry Weber*, a laborious German, of whom we shall hear more hereafter. With regard to the pictorial embellishments contemplated for the first edition of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, I believe the artist in whose designs the poet took the greatest interest was Mr. Masquerier, now of Brighton, with whom he corresponded at some length on the subject; but his distance from that ingenious gentleman's residence was inconvenient, and the booksellers were probably impatient of delay, when the MS. was once known to be in the hands of the printer.

There is a circumstance which must already have struck such of my readers as knew the author in his latter days, namely, the readiness with which he seems to have communicated this poem, in its progress, not only to his own familiar friends, but to new and casual acquaintances. We shall find him following the same course with his Marmion —but not, I think, with any of his subsequent works. His

determination to consult the movements of his own mind alone in the conduct of his pieces was probably taken before he began the Lay; and he soon resolved to trust for the detection of minor inaccuracies to two persons only—James Ballantyne and William Erskine. The printer was himself a man of considerable literary talents; his own style had the incurable faults of pomposity and affectation, but his eye for more venial errors in the writings of others was quick, and, though his personal address was apt to give a stranger the impression of insincerity, he was in reality an honest man, and conveyed his mind on such matters with equal candor and delicacy during the whole of Scott's brilliant career. In the vast majority of instances, he found his friend acquiesce at once in the propriety of his suggestions; nay, there certainly were cases, though rare, in which his advice to alter things of much more consequence than a word or a rhyme, was frankly tendered, and, on deliberation, adopted by Scott. Mr. Erskine was the referee whenever the poet hesitated about taking the hints of the zealous typographer, and his refined taste and gentle manners rendered his critical alliance highly valuable. With two such faithful friends within his reach, the author of the Lay might safely dispense with sending his MS. to be revised even by George Ellis.

Before he left Ashestiel for the winter session, the printing of the poem had made considerable progress. Ellis writes to him on the 10th November, complaining of bad health, and adds,—

"Tu quid agis? I suppose you are still an inhabitant of Reged, and being there it is impossible that your head should have been solely occupied by the ten thousand cares which you are likely to have in common with other mortals, or even by the *Lay*, which must have been long since completed, but must have started, during the summer, new projects sufficient to employ the lives of half-a-dozen patriarchs. Pray tell me all about it, for as the present state of my frame precludes me from much activity, I want to enjoy that of my friends."

Scott answers from Edinburgh:—

"I fear you fall too much into the sedentary habits incident to a literary life, like my poor friend Plummer, who used to say that a

walk from the parlor to the garden once a day was sufficient exercise for any rational being, and that no one but a fool or a fox-hunter would take more. I wish you could have had a seat on Hassan's tapestry to have brought Mrs. Ellis and you soft and fair to Ashestiel, where with farm mutton at 4 P. M., and goats' whey at 6 A. M., I think we could have reëstablished as much *embonpoint* as ought to satisfy a poetical antiquary. As for my country amusements, I have finished the Lay, with which, and its accompanying notes, the press now groans; but I have started nothing except some scores of hares, many of which my gallant greyhounds brought to the ground."

Ellis had also touched upon a literary feud then raging between Scott's allies of the Edinburgh Review, and the late Dr. Thomas Young, illustrious for inventive genius, displayed equally in physical science and in philological literature. A northern critic, whoever he was, had treated with merry contempt certain discoveries in natural philosophy and the mechanical arts, more especially that of the undulating theory of light, which ultimately conferred on Young's name one of its highest distinctions.

"He had been for some time," says Ellis, "lecturer at the Royal Institution; and having determined to publish his lectures, he had received from one of the booksellers the offer of £1000 for the copy-right. He was actually preparing for the press, when the bookseller came to him, and told him that the ridicule thrown by the Edinburgh Review on some papers of his in the Philosophical Transactions, had so frightened the whole *trade* that he must request to be released from his bargain. This consequence, it is true, could not have been foreseen by the reviewer, who, however, appears to have written from feelings of private animosity; and I still continue to think, though I greatly admire the good taste of the literary essays, and the perspicuity of the dissertations on political economy, that an apparent want of candor is too generally the character of a work which, from its independence on the interests of booksellers, might have been expected to be particularly free from this defect."

Scott rejoins:—

"I am sorry for the very pitiful catastrophe of Dr. Young's publication, because, although I am altogether unacquainted with the merits of the controversy, one must always regret so very serious a consequence of a diatribe. The truth is, that these gentlemen reviewers ought often to read over the fable of the boys and frogs, and should also remember it is much more easy to destroy than to build, to criticise than to compose. While on this subject,

I kiss the rod of my critic in the Edinburgh, on the subject of the price of Sir Tristrem; it was not my fault, however, that the public had it not cheap enough, as I declined taking any copy-money, or share in the profits, and *nothing* surely was as reasonable a charge as I could make."

On the 30th December he resumes:—

"The *Lay* is now ready, and will probably be in Longman and Rees's hands shortly after this comes to yours. I have charged them to send you a copy by the first conveyance, and shall be impatient to know whether you think the entire piece corresponds to that which you have already seen. I would also fain send a copy to Gifford, by way of introduction.—My reason is, that I understand he is about to publish an edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, and I think I could offer him the use of some miscellaneous notes, which I made long since on the margin of their works.* Besides, I have a good esteem of Mr. Gifford as a manly English poet, very different from most of our modern versifiers.—We are so fond of Reged that we are just going to set out for our farm in the middle of a snow-storm; all that we have to comfort ourselves with is, that our march has been ordered with great military talent—a detachment of minced pies and brandy having preceded us. In case we are not buried in a snow-wreath, our stay will be but short. Should that event happen, we must wait the thaw."

Ellis, not having as yet received the new poem, answers on the 9th January, 1805:—

"I look daily and with the greatest anxiety for the Last Minstrel—of which I still hope to see a future edition decorated with designs *à la Flaxman*, as the Lays of Homer have already been. I think you told me that Sir Tristrem had not excited much sensation in Edinburgh. As I have not been in London this age, I can't produce the contrary testimony of our metropolis. But I can produce one person, and that one worth a considerable number, who speaks of it with rapture, and says, 'I am only sorry that Scott has not (and I am sure he has not) told us the whole of his creed on the subject of Tomas, and the other early Scotch minstrels. I suppose he was afraid of the critics, and determined to say very little more than he was able to establish by incontestable

* It was his *Massinger* that Gifford had at this time in hand. His Ben Jonson followed, and then his Ford. Some time later, he projected editions, both of Beaumont and Fletcher, and of Shakspeare: but, to the grievous misfortune of literature, died without having completed either of them. We shall see presently what became of Scott's Notes on Beaumont and Fletcher.

proofs. I feel infinitely obliged to him for what he has told us, and I have no hesitation in saying, that I consider Sir T. as by far the most interesting work that has as yet been published on the subject of our earliest poets, and, indeed, such a piece of literary antiquity as no one could have, *a priori*, supposed to exist.' This is Frere—our ex-ambassador for Spain, whom you would delight to know, and who would delight to know you. It is remarkable that *you* were, I believe, the *most ardent* of all the admirers of his old English version of the Saxon Ode;* and he is, *per contra*, the warmest panegyrist of your *Conclusion*, which he can repeat by heart, and affirms to be the very best imitation of old English at present existing. I think I can trust you for having concluded the Last Minstrel with as much spirit as it was begun—if you have been capable of any thing unworthy of your fame amidst the highest mountains of Reged, there is an end of all inspiration."

Scott answers:—

"Frere is so perfect a master of the ancient style of composition, that I would rather have his suffrage than that of a whole synod of your vulgar antiquaries. The more I think on *our* system of the origin of romance, the more simplicity and uniformity it seems to possess; and though I adopted it late and with hesitation, I believe I shall never see cause to abandon it. Yet I am aware of the danger of attempting to *prove*, where proofs are but scanty, and probable suppositions must be placed in lieu of them. I think the Welsh antiquaries have considerably injured their claims to confidence, by attempting to detail very remote events with all the accuracy belonging to the facts of yesterday. You will hear one of them describe you the cut of Llywarch Hen's beard, or the whittle of Urien Reged, as if he had trimmed the one, or cut his cheese with the other. These high pretensions weaken greatly our belief in the Welsh poems, which probably contain real treasures. 'Tis a pity some sober-minded man will not take the trouble to sift the wheat from the chaff, and give us a good account of their MSS. and traditions. Pray, what is become of the *Mabi-*

* "I have only met, in my researches into these matters," says Scott in 1830, "with one poem, which, if it had been produced as ancient, could not have been detected on internal evidence. It is the War Song upon the Victory at Brunnanburgh, translated from the Anglo-Saxon into Anglo-Norman, by the Right Hon. John Hookham Frere. See Ellis's *Specimens of Ancient English Poetry*, vol. i. p. 32. The accomplished editor tells us, that this very singular poem was intended as an imitation of the style and language of the fourteenth century, and was written during the controversy occasioned by the poems attributed to Rowley. Mr. Ellis adds, 'The reader will probably hear with some surprise that this singular instance of critical ingenuity was the composition of an Eton schoolboy."—*Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad*, p. 19.

nogion? It is a proverb, that children and fools talk truth, and I am mistaken if even the same valuable quality may not sometimes be extracted out of the tales made to entertain both. I presume, while we talk of childish and foolish tales, that the Lay is already with you, although, in these points, *Longmanum est errare.* Pray inquire for your copy."

In the first week of January, 1805, "The Lay" was published; and its success at once decided that literature should form the main business of Scott's life.

In his modest *Introduction* of 1830, he had himself told us all that he thought the world would ever desire to know of the origin and progress of this his first great original production. The present Memoir, however, has already included many minor particulars, for which I believe no student of literature will reproach the compiler. I shall not mock the reader with many words as to the merits of a poem which has now kept its place for nearly a third of a century; but one or two additional remarks on the history of the composition may be pardoned.

It is curious to trace the small beginnings and gradual development of his design. The lovely Countess of Dalkeith hears a wild, rude legend of Border *diablerie*, and sportively asks him to make it the subject of a ballad. He had been already laboring in the elucidation of the "quaint Inglis" ascribed to an ancient seer and bard of the same district, and perhaps completed his own sequel, intending the whole to be included in the third volume of the Minstrelsy. He assents to Lady Dalkeith's request, and casts about for some new variety of diction and rhyme, which might be adopted without impropriety in a closing strain for the same collection. Sir John Stoddart's casual recitation, a year or two before, of Coleridge's unpublished Christabel, had fixed the music of that noble fragment in his memory; and it occurs to him, that by throwing the story of Gilpin Horner into somewhat of a similar cadence, he might produce such an echo of the later metrical romance, as would serve to connect his *Conclusion* of the primitive Sir Tristrem with his imitations of the common popular ballad in the Grey Brother and Eve of St. John.

A single scene of feudal festivity in the hall of Branksome, disturbed by some pranks of a nondescript goblin, was probably all that he contemplated; but his accidental confinement in the midst of a volunteer camp gave him leisure to meditate his theme to the sound of the bugle;—and suddenly there flashes on him the idea of extending his simple outline, so as to embrace a vivid panorama of that old Border life of war and tumult, and all earnest passions, with which his researches on the "Minstrelsy" had by degrees fed his imagination, until every the minutest feature had been taken home and realized with unconscious intenseness of sympathy; so that he had won for himself in the past another world, hardly less complete or familiar than the present. Erskine or Cranstoun suggests that he would do well to divide the poem into cantos, and prefix to each of them a motto explanatory of the action, after the fashion of Spenser in the Faery Queen. He pauses for a moment—and the happiest conception of the framework of a picturesque narrative that ever occurred to any poet—one that Homer might have envied—the creation of the ancient harper starts to life. By such steps did the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" grow out of the "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border."

A word more of its felicitous machinery. It was at Bowhill that the Countess of Dalkeith requested a ballad on Gilpin Horner. The ruined castle of Newark closely adjoins that seat, and is now indeed included within its *pleasance*. Newark had been the chosen residence of the first Duchess of Buccleuch, and he accordingly shadows out his own beautiful friend in the person of her lord's ancestress, the last of the original stock of that great house; himself the favored inmate of Bowhill, introduced certainly to the familiarity of its circle in consequence of his devotion to the poetry of a bypast age, in that of an aged minstrel, "the last of all the race," seeking shelter at the gate of Newark, in days when many an adherent of the fallen cause of Stewart,—his own bearded ancestor, *who had fought at Killiekrankie*, among the rest,—owed their safety to her who,

"In pride of power, in beauty's bloom,
Had wept o'er Monmouth's bloody tomb."

The arch allusions which run through all these *Introductions*, without in the least interrupting the truth and graceful pathos of their main impression, seem to me exquisitely characteristic of Scott, whose delight and pride was to play with the genius which nevertheless mastered him at will. For, in truth, what is it that gives to all his works their unique and marking charm, except the matchless effect which sudden effusions of the purest heart-blood of nature derive from their being poured out, to all appearance involuntarily, amidst diction and sentiment cast equally in the mould of the busy world, and the seemingly habitual desire to dwell on nothing but what might be likely to excite curiosity, without too much disturbing deeper feelings, in the saloons of polished life? Such outbursts come forth dramatically in all his writings; but in the interludes and passionate parentheses of the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," we have the poet's own inner soul and temperament laid bare and throbbing before us:—even here, indeed, he has a mask, and he trusts it—but fortunately it is a transparent one.

Many minor personal allusions have been explained in the notes to the last edition of the "Lay." It was hardly necessary even then to say that the choice of the hero had been dictated by the poet's affection for the living descendants of the Baron of Cranstoun; and now—none who have perused the preceding pages can doubt, that he had dressed out his Margaret of Branksome in the form and features of his own first love. This poem may be considered as the "bright, consummate flower," in which all the dearest dreams of his youthful fancy had at length found expansion for their strength, spirit, tenderness, and beauty.

In the closing lines—

"Hushed is the harp—the Minstrel gone;
And did he wander forth alone?
Alone, in indigence and age,
To linger out his pilgrimage?
No!—close beneath proud Newark's tower
Arose the Minstrel's humble bower," &c.

—in these closing lines he has embodied what was, at the time when he penned them, the chief day-dream of Ashestiel. From the moment that his uncle's death placed a considerable sum of ready money at his command, he pleased himself, as we have seen, with the idea of buying a mountain farm, and becoming not only the "sheriff," (as he had in former days delighted to call himself,) but "the *laird* of the cairn and the scaur." While he was "laboring *doucement* at the Lay," (as in one of his letters he expresses it,) during the recess of 1804, circumstances rendered it next to certain that the small estate of *Broadmeadows*, situated just over against the ruins of Newark, on the northern bank of the Yarrow, would soon be exposed to sale; and many a time did he ride round it in company with Lord and Lady Dalkeith,

"When summer smiled on sweet Bowhill,"

surveying the beautiful little domain with wistful eyes, and anticipating that

"*There* would he sing achievement high
And circumstance of chivalry,
Till the rapt traveller would stay,
Forgetful of the closing day;
And noble youths, the strain to hear,
Forget the hunting of the deer;
And Yarrow, as he rolled along,
Bear burden to the Minstrel's song.'

I consider it as, in one point of view, the greatest misfortune of his life that this vision was not realized; but the success of the poem itself changed "the spirit of his dream." The favor which it at once attained had not been equalled, in the case of any one poem of considerable length, during at least two generations: it certainly had not been approached in the case of any narrative poem since the days of Dryden. Before it was sent to the press, it had received warm commendation from the ablest and most influential critic of the time; but when Mr. Jeffrey's reviewal appeared, a month after publication, laudatory as its language was, it scarcely came up to the opinion which had already taken root in the public mind. It, however, quite

satisfied the author; and, were I at liberty to insert some letters which passed between them in the course of the summer of 1805, it would be seen that their feelings towards each other were those of mutual confidence and gratitude. Indeed, a severe domestic affliction, which about this time befell Mr. Jeffrey, called out the expression of such sentiments on both sides, in a very touching manner.

I abstain from transcribing the letters which conveyed to Scott the private opinions of persons themselves eminently distinguished in poetry; but I think it just to state that I have not discovered in any of them—no, not even in those of Wordsworth or Campbell—a strain of approbation higher, on the whole, than that of the chief professional reviewer of the period. When the happy days of youth are over, even the most genial and generous of minds are seldom able to enter into the strains of a new poet with that full and open delight which he awakens in the bosoms of the rising generation about him. Their deep and eager sympathies have already been drawn upon to an extent of which the prosaic part of the species can never have any conception; and, when the fit of creative inspiration has subsided, they are apt to be rather cold critics even of their own noblest appeals to the simple, primary feelings of their kind. Miss Seward's letter on this occasion has been since included in the printed collection of her correspondence; but perhaps the reader may form a sufficient notion of its tenor from the poet's answer—which, at all events, he will be amused to compare with the Introduction of 1830:—

"*To Miss Seward, Lichfield.*

"Edinburgh, 21st March, 1805.

"My dear Miss Seward,

"I am truly happy that you found any amusement in the Lay of the Last Minstrel. It has great faults, of which no one can be more sensible than I am myself. Above all, it is deficient in that sort of continuity which a story ought to have, and which, were it to write again, I would endeavor to give it. But I began and wandered forward, like one in a pleasant country, getting to the top of one hill to see a prospect, and to the bottom of another to enjoy a shade, and what wonder if my course has been devious and desultory, and many of my excursions altogether unprofitable to the

advance of my journey? The Dwarf Page is also an excrescence, and I plead guilty of all the censures concerning him. The truth is, he has a history, and it is this: The story of Gilpin Horner was told by an old gentleman to Lady Dalkeith, and she, much diverted with his actually believing so grotesque a tale, insisted that I should make it into a Border ballad. I don't know if ever you saw my lovely chieftainess—if you have, you must be aware that it is *impossible* for any one to refuse her request, as she has more of the angel in face and temper than any one alive; so that if she had asked me to write a ballad on a broomstick, I must have attempted it. I began a few verses, to be called the Goblin Page; and they lay long by me, till the applause of some friends whose judgment I valued induced me to resume the poem; so on I wrote, knowing no more than the man in the moon how I was to end. At length the story appeared so uncouth, that I was fain to put it into the mouth of my old minstrel, lest the nature of it should be misunderstood, and I should be suspected of setting up a new school of poetry, instead of a feeble attempt to imitate the old. In the process of the romance, the page, intended to be a principal person in the work, contrived (from the baseness of his natural propensities, I suppose) to slink down stairs into the kitchen, and now he must e'en abide there.

"I mention these circumstances to you, and to any one whose applause I value, because I am unwilling you should suspect me of trifling with the public in *malice prepense*. As to the herd of critics, it is impossible for me to pay much attention to them; for, as they do not understand what I call poetry, we talk in a foreign language to each other. Indeed, many of these gentlemen appear to me to be a sort of tinkers, who, unable to *make* pots and pans, set up for *menders* of them, and, God knows, often make two holes in patching one. The sixth canto is altogether redundant; for the poem should certainly have closed with the union of the lovers, when the interest, if any, was at an end. But what could I do? I had my book and my page still on my hands, and must get rid of them at all events. Manage them as I would, their catastrophe must have been insufficient to occupy an entire canto; so I was fain to eke it out with the songs of the minstrels. I will now descend from the confessional, which I think I have occupied long enough for the patience of my fair confessor. I am happy you are disposed to give me absolution, notwithstanding all my sins.

"We have a new poet come forth amongst us—James Graham, author of a poem called the Sabbath, which I admire very much. If I can find an opportunity, I will send you a copy. Your affectionate, humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

Mr. Ellis does not seem to have written at any length on

the subject of the Lay, until he had perused the article in the Edinburgh Review. He then says,—

"Though I had previously made up my mind, or rather perhaps because I had done so, I was very anxious to compare my sentiments with those of the Edinburgh critic; and I found that, in general, we were perfectly agreed, though there are parts of the subject which we consider from very different points of view. Frere, with whom I had not any previous communication about it, agrees with me; and, trusting very much to the justice of his poetical feelings, I feel some degree of confidence in my own judgment,—though in opposition to Mr. Jeffrey, whose criticism I admire, upon the whole, extremely, as being equally acute and impartial, and as exhibiting the fairest judgment respecting the work that could be formed by the mere assistance of good sense and general taste, without that particular sort of taste which arises from the study of romantic compositions.

"What Frere and myself think, must be stated in the shape of a *hypercriticism*—that is to say, of a review of the reviewer. We say that the Lay of the Last Minstrel is a work *sui generis*, written with the *intention* of exhibiting what our old romances do indeed exhibit in point of fact, but incidentally, and often without the wish, or rather contrary to the wish, of the author; viz. the manners of a particular age; and that, therefore, if it does this truly, and is at the same time capable of keeping the steady attention of the reader, it is so far perfect. This is also a poem, and ought therefore to contain a great deal of poetical merit. This, indeed, it does, by the admission of the reviewer; and it must be admitted that he has shown much real taste in estimating the most beautiful passages; but he finds fault with many of the lines as careless, with some as prosaic, and contends that the story is not sufficiently full of incident, and that one of the incidents is borrowed from a merely local superstition, &c., &c. To this we answer—1st, that if the Lay were intended to give *any* idea of the Minstrel compositions, it would have been a most glaring absurdity to have rendered the poetry as perfect and uniform as the works usually submitted to modern readers—and as, in telling a story, nothing, or very little, would be lost, though the merely connecting part of the narrative were in plain prose, the reader is certainly no loser by the incorrectness of the smaller parts. Indeed, who is so unequal as Dryden? It may be said that he was not intentionally so—but to be *very smooth* is very often to be *tame;* and though this should be admitted to be a less important fault than inequality in a common modern poem, there can be no doubt with respect to the necessity of subjecting yourself to the latter fault, (if it is one,) in an imitation of an ancient model. 2d, though it is naturally to be expected that many readers will expect an almost infinite accumulation of incidents in a romance,

this is only because readers in general have acquired all their ideas on the subject from the prose romances, which commonly contained a farrago of metrical stories. The *only* thing *essential* to a romance was, that it should be *believed* by the hearers. Not only tournaments, but battles, are indeed accumulated in some of our ancient romances, because tradition had of course ascribed to every great conqueror a great number of conquests; and the minstrel would have been thought deficient, if, in a warlike age, he had omitted any military event. But, in other respects, a paucity of incident is the general characteristic of our minstrel poems. 3d, with respect to the Goblin Page, it is by no means necessary that the superstition on which this is founded should be universally or even generally current. It is quite sufficient that it should exist somewhere in the neighborhood of the castle where the scene is placed; and it cannot fairly be required that, because the goblin is mischievous, all his tricks should be directed to the production of general evil. The old idea of goblins seems to have been, that they were essentially active, and careless about the mischief they produced, rather than providentially malicious.

"We therefore (i. e. Frere and myself) dissent from all the reviewer's objections to those circumstances in the narrative; but we entertain some doubts about the propriety of dwelling so long on the Minstrel songs in the last Canto. I say we *doubt*, because we are not aware of your having *ancient authority* for such a practice; but though the attempt was a bold one, inasmuch as it is not usual to add a whole canto to a story which is already finished, we are far from wishing that you had left it unattempted. I must tell you the answer of a philosopher (Sir Henry Englefield) to a friend of his who was criticising the obscurity of the language used in the Minstrel. 'I read little poetry, and often am in doubt whether I exactly understand the poet's meaning; but I found, after reading the Minstrel three times, that I understood it all perfectly.' 'Three times?' replied his friend. 'Yes, certainly; the first time, I discovered that there was a great deal of meaning in it; a second would have cleared it all up, but that I was run away with by the beautiful passages, which distracted my attention; the third time I skipped over these, and only attended to the scheme and structure of the poem, with which I am delighted.' At this conversation I was present, and, though I could not help smiling at Sir Henry's mode of reading poetry, was pleased to see the degree of interest which he took in the narrative."*

* Mr. Morritt informs me, that he well remembers the dinner where this conversation occurred, and thinks Mr. Ellis has omitted in his report the best thing that Sir Harry Englefied said, in answer to one of the *Dii Minorum Gentium*, who made himself conspicuous by the severity of his censure on the verbal inaccuracies and careless lines of The Lay. "My dear sir," said the Baronet, "you remind me of a lecture on sculpture, which M. Falconet delivered at Rome, shortly

I fancy most of my readers will agree with me in thinking that Sir Henry Englefield's method of reading and enjoying poetry was more to be envied than smiled at; and in doubting whether posterity will ever dispute about the "*propriety*" of the Canto which includes the Ballad of Rosabelle and the Requiem of Melrose. The friendly *hypercritics* seem, I confess, to have judged the poem on principles not less pedantic, though of another kind of pedantry, than those which induced the *critic* to pronounce that its great prevailing blot originated in those "local partialities of the author," which had induced him to expect general interest and sympathy for such personages as his "Johnstones, Elliots, and Armstrongs." "Mr. Scott," said Jeffrey, "must either sacrifice his Border prejudices, or offend his readers in the other parts of the empire." It might have been answered by Ellis or Frere, that these Border clans figured, after all, on a scene at least as wide as the Troad; and that their chiefs were not perhaps inferior, either in rank or power, to the majority of the Homeric kings; but even the most zealous of its admirers among the professed literators of the day would hardly have ventured to suspect that the Lay of the Last Minstrel might have no prejudices to encounter but their own. It was destined to charm not only the British empire, but the whole civilized world; and had, in fact, exhibited a more Homeric genius than any regular epic since the days of Homer.

"It would be great affectation," says the Introduction of 1830, "not to own that the author expected some success from the Lay of the Last Minstrel. The attempt to return to a more simple and natural style of poetry was likely to be welcomed, at a time when the public had become tired of heroic hexameters, with all the buckram and binding that belong to them in modern days. But

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after completing the model of his equestrian statue of Czar Peter, now at Petersburg. He took for his subject the celebrated horse of Marcus Aurelius in the Capitol, and pointed out as many faults in it as ever a jockey did in an animal he was about to purchase. But something came over him, vain as he was, when he was about to conclude the harangue. He took a long pinch of snuff, and eyeing his own faultless model, exclaimed with a sigh—*Cependant, Messieurs, il faut avouer que cette vilaine bête là est vivante, et que la mienne est morte.*"

whatever might have been his expectations, whether moderate or unreasonable, the result left them far behind; for among those who smiled on the adventurous minstrel were numbered the great names of William Pitt and Charles Fox. Neither was the extent of the sale inferior to the character of the judges who received the poem with approbation. Upwards of 30,000 copies were disposed of by the trade; and the author had to perform a task difficult to human vanity, when called upon to make the necessary deductions from his own merits, in a calm attempt to account for its popularity."

Through what channel or in what terms Fox made known his opinion of the Lay, I have failed to ascertain. Pitt's praise, as expressed to his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, within a few weeks after the poem appeared, was repeated by her to Mr. William Stewart Rose, who, of course, communicated it forthwith to the author; and not long after, the Minister, in conversation with Scott's early friend, the Right Hon. William Dundas, signified that it would give him pleasure to find some opportunity of advancing the fortunes of such a writer. "I remember," writes this gentleman, "at Mr. Pitt's table, in 1805, the Chancellor asked me about you and your then situation, and after I had answered him, Mr. Pitt observed,—'He can't remain as he is,' and desired me to 'look to it.' He then repeated some lines from the Lay describing the old harper's embarrassment when asked to play, and said,—'This is a sort of thing which I might have expected in painting, but could never have fancied capable of being given in poetry.'" *

It is agreeable to know that this great statesman and accomplished scholar awoke at least once from his supposed apathy as to the elegant literature of his own time.

The poet has underestimated even the patent and tangible evidence of his success. The first edition of the Lay was a magnificent quarto, 750 copies; but this was soon exhausted, and there followed an octavo impression of 1500; in 1806, two more, one of 2000 copies, another of 2250; in 1807, a fifth edition of 2000, and a sixth of 3000; in 1808, 3550; in 1809, 3000—a small edition

* Letter dated April 25th, 1818, and endorsed by Scott, "*William Dundas—a very kind letter.*"

in quarto, (the ballads and lyrical pieces being then annexed to it,)—and another octavo edition of 3250; in 1811, 3000; in 1812, 3000; in 1816, 3000; in 1823, 1000. A fourteenth impression of 2000 foolscap appeared in 1825; and besides all this, before the end of 1836, 11,000 copies had gone forth in the collected editions of his poetical works. Thus, nearly forty-four thousand copies had been disposed of in this country, and by the legitimate trade alone, before he superintended the edition of 1830, to which his biographical introductions were prefixed. In the history of British Poetry, nothing had ever equalled the demand for the Lay of the Last Minstrel.

The publishers of the first edition were Longman and Co. of London, and Archibald Constable and Co. of Edinburgh; which last house, however, had but a small share in the adventure. The profits were to be divided equally between the author and his publishers; and Scott's moiety was £169, 6s. Messrs. Longman, when a second edition was called for, offered £500 for the copy-right; this was accepted, but they afterwards, as the Introduction says, "added £100 in their own unsolicited kindness. It was handsomely given to supply the loss of a fine horse which broke down suddenly while the author was riding with one of the worthy publishers." This worthy publisher was Mr. Owen Rees, and the gallant steed, to whom a desperate leap in the coursing-field proved fatal, was, I believe, *Captain*, the immediate successor of *Lenore*, as Scott's charger in the volunteer cavalry; *Captain* was replaced by *Lieutenant*. The author's whole share, then, in the profits of the Lay, came to £769, 6s.

Mr. Rees' visit to Ashestiel occurred in the autumn. The success of the poem had already been decisive; and fresh negotiations of more kinds than one were at this time in progress between Scott and various booksellers' houses both of Edinburgh and London.

CHAPTER III.

PARTNERSHIP WITH JAMES BALLANTYNE—LITERARY PROJECTS—EDITION OF THE BRITISH POETS—EDITION OF THE ANCIENT ENGLISH CHRONICLES, &c. &c.—EDITION OF DRYDEN UNDERTAKEN—EARL MOIRA COMMANDER OF THE FORCES IN SCOTLAND—SHAM BATTLES—ARTICLES IN THE EDINBURGH REVIEW—COMMENCEMENT OF WAVERLEY—LETTER ON OSSIAN—MR. SKENE'S REMINISCENCES OF ASHESTIEL—EXCURSION TO CUMBERLAND—ALARM OF INVASION—VISIT OF MR. SOUTHEY—CORRESPONDENCE ON DRYDEN WITH ELLIS AND WORDSWORTH—1805.

Mr. Ballantyne, in his Memorandum, says, that very shortly after the publication of the Lay, he found himself obliged to apply to Mr. Scott for an advance of money; his own capital being inadequate for the business which had been accumulated on his press, in consequence of the reputation it had acquired for beauty and correctness of execution. Already, as we have seen, Ballantyne had received "a liberal loan;" "and now," says he, "being compelled, maugre all delicacy, to renew my application, he candidly answered that he was not quite sure that it would be prudent for him to comply, but in order to evince his entire confidence in me, he was willing to make a suitable advance to be admitted as a third sharer of my business." In truth, Scott now embarked in Ballantyne's concern almost the whole of the capital at his disposal, namely, the £5000 which he had received for Rosebank, and which he had a few months before designed to invest in the purchase of Broadmeadows. *Dis aliter visum.*

I have, many pages back, hinted my suspicion that he had formed some distant notion of such an alliance, as early as the date of Ballantyne's projected removal from Kelso to Edinburgh; and his Introduction to the Lay, in 1830, appears to leave little doubt that the hope of ultimately succeeding at the bar had waxed very faint before the

third volume of the Minstrelsy was brought out in 1803. When that hope ultimately vanished altogether, perhaps he himself would not have found it easy to tell. The most important of men's opinions, views, and projects, are sometimes taken up in so very gradual a manner, and after so many pauses of hesitation and of inward retraction, that they themselves are at a loss to trace in retrospect all the stages through which their minds have passed. We see plainly that Scott had never been fond of his profession, but that, conscious of his own persevering diligence, he ascribed his scanty success in it mainly to the prejudices of the Scotch solicitors against employing, in weighty causes at least, any barrister supposed to be strongly imbued with the love of literature; instancing the career of his friend Jeffrey as almost the solitary instance within his experience of such prejudices being entirely overcome. Had Scott, to his strong sense and dexterous ingenuity, his well-grounded knowledge of the jurisprudence of his country, and his admirable industry, added a brisk and ready talent for debate and declamation, I can have no doubt that his triumph over the prejudices alluded to would have been as complete as Mr. Jeffrey's; nor, in truth, do I much question that, had one really great and interesting case been submitted to his sole care and management, the result would have been to place his professional character for skill and judgment, and variety of resource, on so firm a basis, that even his rising celebrity as a man of letters could not have seriously disturbed it. Nay, I think it quite possible, that had he been intrusted with one such case after his reputation was estab lished, and he had been compelled to do his abilities some measure of justice in his own secret estimate, he might have displayed very considerable powers even as a forensic speaker. But no opportunities of this engaging kind having ever been presented to him—after he had persisted for more than ten years in sweeping the floor of the Parliament House, without meeting with any employment but what would have suited the dullest drudge, and seen himself termly and yearly more and more distanced by contemporaries for whose general capacity he could have had little

respect—while, at the same time, he already felt his own position in the eyes of society at large to have been signally elevated in consequence of his extra-professional exertions—it is not wonderful that disgust should have gradually gained upon him, and that the sudden blaze and tumult of renown which surrounded the author of the Lay, should have at last determined him to concentrate all his ambition on the pursuits which had alone brought him distinction. It ought to be mentioned that the business in George's Square, once extensive and lucrative, had dwindled away in the hands of his brother Thomas, whose varied and powerful talents were unfortunately combined with some tastes by no means favorable to the successful prosecution of his prudent father's vocation; so that very possibly even the humble employment of which, during his first years at the bar, Scott had at least a sure and respectable allowance, was by this time much reduced. I have not his fee-books of later date than 1803: it is, however, my impression, from the whole tenor of his conversation and correspondence, that after that period he had not only not advanced as a professional man, but had been retrograding in nearly the same proportion that his literary reputation advanced.

We have seen that before he formed his contract with Ballantyne, he was in possession of such a fixed income as might have satisfied all his desires, had he not found his family increasing rapidly about him. Even as that was, with nearly, if not quite, £1000 per annum, he might perhaps have retired not only from the bar, but from Edinburgh, and settled entirely at Ashestiel or Broadmeadows, without encountering what any man of his station and habits ought to have considered as an imprudent risk. He had, however, no wish to cut himself off from the busy and intelligent society to which he had been hitherto accustomed, and resolved not to leave the bar until he should have at least used his best efforts for obtaining, in addition to his Shrievalty, one of those clerkships of the supreme court at Edinburgh which are usually considered as honorable retirements for advocates who, at a certain standing, finally give up all hopes of reaching the dignity of the bench.

"I determined," he says, "that literature should be my staff, but not my crutch, and that the profits of my literary labor, however convenient otherwise, should not, if I could help it, become necessary to my ordinary expenses. Upon such a post an author might hope to retreat, without any perceptible alteration of circumstances, whenever the time should arrive that the public grew weary of his endeavors to please, or he himself should tire of the pen. I possessed so many friends capable of assisting me in this object of ambition, that I could hardly overrate my own prospects of obtaining the preferment to which I limited my wishes; and, in fact, I obtained, in no long period, the reversion of a situation which completely met them." *

The first notice of this affair that occurs in his correspondence, is in a note of Lord Dalkeith's, Feb. the 2d, 1805, in which his noble friend says, "My father desires me to tell you that he has had a communication with Lord Melville within these few days, and that he thinks *your business is in a good train, though not certain.*" I consider it as clear, then, that he began his negotiations concerning a seat at the clerk's table immediately after the Lay was published; and that their commencement had been resolved upon in the strictest connection with his embarkation in the printing concern of James Ballantyne and Company. Such matters are seldom speedily arranged; but we shall find him in possession of his object before twelve months had elapsed.

Meanwhile, his design of quitting the bar was divulged to none but those immediately necessary for the purposes of his negotiation with the Government; and the nature of his connection with the printing company remained, I believe, not only unknown, but for some years wholly unsuspected, by any of his daily companions except Mr. Erskine.

The forming of this commercial connection was one of the most important steps in Scott's life. He continued bound by it during twenty years, and its influence on his literary exertions and his worldly fortunes was productive of much good and not a little evil. Its effects were in truth so mixed and balanced during the vicissitudes of a long and vigorous career, that I at this moment doubt

* Introduction to the Lay of the Last Minstrel. 1830.

whether it ought, on the whole, to be considered with more of satisfaction or of regret.

With what zeal he proceeded in advancing the views of the new copartnership, his correspondence bears ample evidence. The brilliant and captivating genius, now acknowledged universally, was soon discovered by the leading booksellers of the time to be united with such abundance of matured information in many departments, and, above all, with such indefatigable habits, as to mark him out for the most valuable workman they could engage for the furtherance of their schemes. He had, long before this, cast a shrewd and penetrating eye over the field of literary enterprise, and developed in his own mind the outlines of many extensive plans, which wanted nothing but the command of a sufficient body of able subalterns to be carried into execution with splendid success. Such of these as he grappled within his own person were, with rare exceptions, carried to a triumphant conclusion; but the alliance with Ballantyne soon infected him with the proverbial rashness of mere mercantile adventure—while, at the same time, his generous feelings for other men of letters, and his characteristic propensity to overrate their talents, combined to hurry him and his friends into a multitude of arrangements, the results of which were often extremely embarrassing, and ultimately, in the aggregate, all but disastrous. It is an old saying, that wherever there is a secret there must be something wrong; and dearly did he pay the penalty for the mystery in which he had chosen to involve this transaction. It was his rule, from the beginning, that whatever he wrote or edited must be printed at that press; and had he catered for it only as author and sole editor, all had been well; but had the booksellers known his direct pecuniary interest in keeping up and extending the occupation of those types, they would have taken into account his lively imagination and sanguine temperament, as well as his taste and judgment, and considered, far more deliberately than they too often did, his multifarious recommendations of new literary schemes, coupled though these were with some dim understanding that, if the Ballantyne

press were employed, his own literary skill would be at his friend's disposal for the general superintendence of the undertaking. On the other hand, Scott's suggestions were, in many cases, perhaps in the majority of them, conveyed through Ballantyne, whose habitual deference to his opinion induced him to advocate them with enthusiastic zeal; and the printer, who had thus pledged his personal authority for the merits of the proposed scheme, must have felt himself committed to the bookseller, and could hardly refuse with decency to take a certain share of the pecuniary risk, by allowing the time and method of his own payment to be regulated according to the employer's convenience. Hence, by degrees, was woven a web of entanglement from which neither Ballantyne nor his adviser had any means of escape, except only in that indomitable spirit, the mainspring of personal industry altogether unparalleled, to which, thus set in motion, the world owes its most gigantic monument of literary genius.

The following is the first letter I have found of Scott to his PARTNER. The Mr. Foster mentioned in the beginning of it was a literary gentleman who had proposed to take on himself a considerable share in the annotation of some of the new *editions* then on the carpet—among others, one of Dryden.

"*To Mr. James Ballantyne, Printer, Edinburgh.*

"Ashestiel, April 12th, 1805.

"Dear Ballantyne,

"I have duly received your two favors—also Foster's. He still howls about the expense of printing, but I think we shall finally settle. His argument is that you print too fine, *alias* too dear. I intend to stick to my answer, that I know nothing of the matter; but that settle it how you and he will, it must be printed by you, or can be no concern of mine. This gives you an advantage in driving the bargain. As to every thing else, I think we shall do, and I will endeavor to set a few volumes agoing on the plan you propose.

"I have imagined a very superb work. What think you of a complete edition of British Poets, ancient and modern? Johnson's is imperfect and out of print; so is Bell's, which is a Lilliputian thing; and Anderson's, the most complete in point of number, is most contemptible in execution both of the editor and printer. There is a scheme for you! At least a hundred volumes, to be

publisned at the rate of ten a-year. I cannot, however, be ready till midsummer. If the booksellers will give me a decent allowance per volume, say thirty guineas, I shall hold myself well paid on the *writing* hand. This is a dead secret.

"I think it quite right to let Doig* have a share of Thomson;† but he is hard and slippery; so settle your bargain fast and firm—no loop-holes! I am glad you have got some elbow-room at last. Cowan will come to, or we will find some fit place in time. If not, we *must* build—necessity has no law. I see nothing to hinder you from doing Tacitus, with your correctness of eye, and I congratulate you on the fair prospect before us. When you have time, you will make out a list of the debts to be discharged at Whitsunday, that we may see what cash we shall have in bank. Our book-keeping may be very simple—an accurate cash-book and leger is all that is necessary; and I think I know enough of the matter to assist at making the balance-sheet.

"In short, with the assistance of a little cash, I have no doubt things will go on *à merveille*. If you could take a little pleasuring, I wish you could come here and see us in all the glories of a Scottish spring. Yours truly,

WALTER SCOTT."

Scott opened, forthwith, his gigantic scheme of the British Poets to Constable, who entered into it with eagerness. They found presently that Messrs. Cadell and Davies, and some of the other London publishers, had a similar plan on foot, and after an unsuccessful negotiation with Mackintosh, were now actually treating with Campbell for the Biographical prefaces. Scott proposed that the Edinburgh and London houses should join in the adventure, and that the editorial task should be shared between himself and his brother poet. To this both Messrs. Cadell and Mr. Campbell warmly assented; but the design ultimately fell to the ground, in consequence of the booksellers refusing to admit certain works which both Scott and Campbell insisted upon. Such, and from analogous causes, has been the fate of various similar schemes both before and since. But the public had no trivial compensation upon the present occasion, since the failure of the original project led Mr. Campbell to prepare for the press those "Specimens of English Poetry,"

* A bookseller in Edinburgh.

† A projected edition of the Works of the author of the Seasons.

which he illustrated with sketches of biography, and critical essays, alike honorable to his learning and taste; while Scott, Mr. Foster ultimately standing off, took on himself the whole burden of a new edition, as well as biography of Dryden. The body of booksellers meanwhile combined in what they still called a *general edition* of the English Poets, under the superintendence of one of their own Grub-street vassals, Mr. Alexander Chalmers.

Precisely at the time when Scott's poetical ambition had been stimulated by the first outburst of universal applause, and when he was forming those engagements with Ballantyne which involved so large an accession of literary labors, as well as of pecuniary cares and responsibilities, a fresh impetus was given to the volunteer mania in Scotland, by the appointment of the late Earl of Moira (afterwards Marquis of Hastings) to the chief military command in that part of the empire. The Earl had married, the year before, a Scottish Peeress, the Countess of Loudon, and entered with great zeal into her sympathy with the patriotic enthusiasm of her countrymen. Edinburgh was converted into a camp: independently of a large garrison of regular troops, nearly 10,000 fencibles and volunteers were almost constantly under arms. The lawyer wore his uniform under his gown; the shopkeeper measured out his wares in scarlet; in short, the citizens of all classes made more use for several months of the military than of any other dress; and the new commander-in-chief consulted equally his own gratification and theirs, by devising a succession of manœuvres, which presented a vivid image of the art of war, conducted on a large and scientific scale. In the *sham battles* and *sham sieges* of 1805, Craigmillar, Preston, Gilmerton, the Crosscauseway, and other formidable positions in the neighborhood of Edinburgh, were the scenes of many a dashing assault and resolute defence; and occasionally the spirits of the mock combatants—English and Scotch, or Lowland and Highland—became so much excited that there was some difficulty in preventing the rough mockery of warfare from passing into its realities. The Highlanders, in particular, were very hard to be dealt with; and once, at least, Lord

Moira was forced to alter, at the eleventh hour, his programme of battle, because a battalion of kilted fencibles could not or would not understand that it was their duty to be beat. Such days as these must have been more nobly spirit-stirring than even the best specimens of the fox-chase. To the end of his life, Scott delighted to recall the details of their countermarches, ambuscades, charges, and pursuits, and in all of these his associates of the Light-Horse agree that none figured more advantageously than himself. Yet these military interludes seem only to have whetted his appetite for closet work. Indeed, nothing but a complete publication of his letters could give an adequate notion of the facility with which he already combined the conscientious magistrate, the martinet quarter-master, the speculative printer, and the ardent lover of literature for its own sake. A few specimens must suffice.

"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"Edinburgh, May 26, 1805.

"My dear Ellis,

"Your silence has been so long and *opinionative*, that I am quite authorized, as a Border ballad-monger, to address you with a—'Sleep you, or wake you?' What has become of the Romances, which I have expected as anxiously as my neighbors around me have watched for the rain, which was to bring the grass, which was to feed the new-calved cows, and to as little purpose, for both Heaven and you have obstinately delayed your favors. After idling away the spring months at Ashestiel, I am just returned to idle away the summer here, and I have lately lighted upon rather an interesting article in your way. If you will turn to Barbour's Bruce, (Pinkerton's edition, p. 66,) you will find that the Lord of Lorn, seeing Bruce covering the retreat of his followers, compares him to Gow MacMorn, (Macpherson's Gaul the son of Morni.) This similitude appears to Barbour a disparagement, and he says, the Lord of Lorn might more mannerly have compared the King to Gadefeir de Lawryss, who was with the mighty Duke Betys when he assailed the forayers in Gadderis, and who in the retreat did much execution among the pursuers; overthrowing Alexander and Thelomier and Danklin, although he was at length slain; and here, says Barbour, the resemblance fails. Now, by one of those chances which favor the antiquary once in an age, a single copy of the romance alluded to has been discovered, containing the whole history of this Gadefeir, who had hitherto been a stumbling-block to the critics. The book was

printed by Arbuthnot, who flourished at Edinburgh in the seventeenth century. It is a metrical romance, called 'The Buik of the Most Noble and Vauliant Conquerour, Alexander the Grit.' The first part is called the Foray of Gadderis, an incident supposed to have taken place while Alexander was besieging Tyre; Gadefeir is one of the principal champions, and after exerting himself in the manner mentioned by Barbour, unhorsing the persons whom he named, he is at length slain by Emynedus, the Earl-Marshal of the Macedonian conqueror. The second part is called the Avowis of Alexander, because it introduces the oaths which he and others made to the peacock in the 'Chalmer of Venus,' and gives an account of the mode in which they accomplished them. The third is the Great Battell of Effesoun, in which Porus makes a distinguished figure. This, you are to understand, is not *the* Porus of India, but one of his sons. The work is in decided Scotch, and adds something to our ancient poetry, being by no means despicable in point of composition. The author says he translated it from the *Franch* or *Romance*, and that he accomplished his work in 1438–9. Barbour must therefore have quoted from the French Alexander, and perhaps his praises of the work excited the Scottish translator. Will you tell me what you think of all this, and whether any transcripts will be of use to you? I am pleased with the accident of its casting up, and hope it may prove the forerunner of more discoveries in the dusty and ill-arranged libraries of our country gentlemen.

"I hope you continue to like the Lay. I have had a flattering assurance of Mr. Fox's approbation, mixed with a censure of my eulogy on the Viscount of Dundee. Although my Tory principles prevent my coinciding with his political opinions, I am very proud of his approbation in a literary sense.

Charlotte joins me, &c. &c.

W. S."

In his answer, Ellis says:—

"Longman lately informed me that you have projected a General Edition of our Poets. I expressed to him my anxiety that the booksellers, who certainly can ultimately sell what they please, should for once undertake something calculated to please intelligent readers, and that they should confine themselves to the selection of paper, types, &c., (which they possibly may understand,) and by no means interfere with the literary part of the business, which, if popularity be the object, they must leave exclusively to you. I am talking, as you perceive, about your plan, without knowing its extent, or any of its details; for these, therefore, I will wait—after confessing that, much as I wish for a *corpus poetarum*, edited as you would edit it, I should like still better another Minstrel Lay by the last and best Minstrel; and the general demand for the poem seems to prove that the public are of my

opinion. If, however, you don't feel disposed to take a second ride on Pegasus, why not undertake something far less *infra dig.* than a mere edition of our poets? Why not undertake what Gibbon once undertook—an edition of our historians? I have never been able to look at a volume of the Benedictine edition of the early French historians without envy."

Mr. Ellis appears to have communicated all his notions on this subject to Messrs. Longman, for Scott writes to Ballantyne (Ashestiel, September 5) :—

"I have had a visit from Rees yesterday. He is anxious about a *corpus historiarum*, or full edition of the Chronicles of England, an immense work. I proposed to him beginning with Hollinshed, and I think the work will be secured for your press. I congratulate you on Clarendon, which, under Thomson's direction, will be a glorious publication." *

The printing-office in the Canongate was by this time in very great request; and the letter I have been quoting contains evidence that the partners had already found it necessary to borrow fresh capital—on the personal security, it need not be added, of Scott himself. He says :—

"As I have full confidence in your applying the accommodation received from Sir William Forbes in the most convenient and prudent manner, I have no hesitation to return the bonds subscribed as you desire. This will put you in cash for great matters."

But to return. To Ellis himself, he says :—

"I have had booksellers here in the plural number. You have set little Rees's head agog about the Chronicles, which would be an admirable work, but should, I think, be edited by an Englishman who can have access to the MSS. of Oxford and Cambridge, as one cannot trust much to the correctness of printed copies. I will, however, consider the matter, so far as a decent edition of Hollinshed is concerned, in case my time is not otherwise taken up. As for the British Poets, my plan was greatly too liberal to stand the least chance of being adopted by the trade at large, as I wished them to begin with Chaucer. The fact is, I never expected they would agree to it. The Benedictines had an infinite advantage over us in that *esprit du corps* which led them to set labor and expense at defiance, when the honor of the order was at stake. Would to God your English Universities, with their huge

* An edition of Clarendon had been, it seems, contemplated by Scott's friend, Mr. Thomas Thomson.

endowments, and the number of learned men to whom they give competence and leisure, would but imitate the monks in their literary plans. My present employment is an edition of John Dryden's Works, which is already gone to press. As for riding on Pegasus, depend upon it, I will never again cross him in a serious way, unless I should, by some strange accident, reside so long in the Highlands, and make myself master of their ancient manners, so as to paint them with some degree of accuracy in a kind of *companion* to the Minstrel Lay..... I am interrupted by the arrival of two *gentil bachelors*, whom, like the Count of Artois, I must despatch upon some adventure till dinner time. Thank Heaven, that will not be difficult, for although there are neither dragons nor boars in the vicinity, and men above six feet are not only scarce, but pacific in their habits, yet we have a curious breed of wild-cats who have eaten all Charlotte's chickens, and against whom I have declared a war at *outrance*, in which the assistance of these *gentes demoiseaux* will be fully as valuable as that of Don Quixote to Pentalopin with the naked arm. So, if Mrs. Ellis takes a fancy for catskin fur, now is the time."

Already, then, he was seriously at work on Dryden. During the same summer, he drew up for the Edinburgh Review an admirable article on Todd's Edition of Spenser; another on Godwin's Fleetwood; a third on the Highland Society's Report concerning the Poems of Ossian; a fourth, on Johnes's Translation of Froissart; a fifth, on Colonel Thornton's Sporting Tour—and a sixth, on some cookery books—the two last being excellent specimens of his humor. He had, besides, a constant succession of minor cares in the superintendence of multifarious works passing through the Ballantyne press. But there is yet another important item to be included in the list of his literary labors of this period. The General Preface to his Novels informs us, that "about 1805" he wrote the opening chapters of Waverley; and the second title, '*Tis Sixty Years Since*, selected, as he says, "that the actual date of publication might correspond with the period in which the scene was laid," leaves no doubt that he had begun the work so early in 1805, as to contemplate publishing it before Christmas.* He adds, in the same page, that he was induced, by

* I have ascertained, since this page was written, that a small part of the MS. of Waverley is on paper bearing the watermark of 1805—the rest on paper of 1813.

the favorable reception of the Lady of the Lake, to think of giving some of his recollections of Highland scenery and customs in prose; but this is only one instance of the inaccuracy, as to matters of date, which pervades all those delightful Prefaces. The Lady of the Lake was not published until five years after the first chapters of Waverley were written; its success, therefore, could have had no share in suggesting the original design of a Highland novel, though no doubt it principally influenced him to take up that design after it had been long suspended, and almost forgotten. Thus early, then, had Scott meditated deeply such a portraiture of Highland manners as might "make a sort of companion" to that of the old Border life in the "Minstrel Lay;" and he had probably begun and suspended his Waverley, before he expressed to Ellis his feeling that he ought to reside for some considerable time in the country to be delineated, before seriously committing himself in the execution of such a task.

"Having proceeded," he says, "as far as, I think, the seventh chapter, I showed my work to a critical friend, whose opinion was unfavorable; and having then some poetical reputation, I was unwilling to risk the loss of it by attempting a new style of composition. I, therefore, then threw aside the work I had commenced, without either reluctance or remonstrance. I ought to add, that though my ingenious friend's sentence was afterwards reversed, on an appeal to the public, it cannot be considered as any imputation on his good taste; for the specimen subjected to his criticism did not extend beyond the departure of the hero for Scotland, and consequently had not entered upon the part of the story which was finally found most interesting."

A letter to be quoted under the year 1810 will, I believe, satisfy the reader, that the first critic of the opening chapters of Waverley was William Erskine.

The following letter must have been written in the course of this autumn. It is in every respect a very interesting one; but I introduce it here as illustrating the course of his reflections on Highland subjects in general, at the time when the first outlines both of the Lady of the Lake and Waverley must have been floating about in his mind:—

"*To Miss Seward, Lichfield.*

"Ashestiel, [1805.]

"My dear Miss Seward,

"You recall to me some very pleasant feelings of my boyhood, when you ask my opinion of Ossian. His works were first put into my hands by old Dr. Blacklock, a blind poet, of whom you may have heard; he was the worthiest and kindest of human beings, and particularly delighted in encouraging the pursuits, and opening the minds, of the young people by whom he was surrounded. I, though, at the period of our intimacy, a very young boy, was fortunate enough to attract his notice and kindness; and if I have been at all successful in the paths of literary pursuit, I am sure I owe much of that success to the books with which he supplied me, and his own instructions. Ossian and Spenser were two books which the good old bard put into my hands, and which I devoured rather than perused. Their tales were for a long time so much my delight, that I could repeat, without remorse, whole cantos of the one and duans of the other; and woe to the unlucky wight who undertook to be my auditor, for, in the height of my enthusiasm, I was apt to disregard all hints that my recitations became tedious. It was a natural consequence of progress in taste, that my fondness for these authors should experience some abatement. Ossian's poems, in particular, have more charms for youth than for a more advanced stage. The eternal repetition of the same ideas and imagery, however beautiful in themselves, is apt to pall upon a reader whose taste has become somewhat fastidious; and, although I agree entirely with you that the question of their authenticity ought not to be confounded with that of their literary merit, yet skepticism on that head takes away their claim for indulgence as the productions of a barbarous and remote age; and, what is perhaps more natural, it destroys that feeling of reality which we should otherwise combine with our sentiments of admiration. As for the great dispute, I should be no Scottishman if I had not very attentively considered it at some period of my studies; and, indeed, I have gone some lengths in my researches, for I have beside me translations of some twenty or thirty of the unquestioned originals of Ossian's poems. After making every allowance for the disadvantages of a literal translation, and the possible debasement which those *now* collected may have suffered in the great and violent change which the Highlands have undergone since the researches of Macpherson, I am compelled to admit that incalculably the greater part of the English Ossian must be ascribed to Macpherson himself, and that his whole introductions, notes, &c. &c. are an absolute tissue of forgeries.

"In all the ballads I ever saw or could hear of, Fin and Ossian are described as natives of Ireland, although it is not unusual for the reciters sturdily to maintain that this is a corruption of the text. In point of merit I do not think these Gaelic poems much

better than those of the Scandinavian Scalds; they are very unequal, often very vigorous and pointed, often drivelling and crawling in the very extremity of tenuity. The manners of the heroes are those of Celtic savages; and I could point out twenty instances in which Macpherson has very cunningly adopted the beginning, the names, and the leading incidents, &c. of an old tale, and dressed it up with all those ornaments of sentiment and sentimental manners, which first excite our surprise, and afterwards our doubt of its authenticity. The Highlanders themselves, recognizing the leading features of tales they had heard in infancy, with here and there a tirade really taken from an old poem, were readily seduced into becoming champions for the authenticity of the poems. How many people not particularly addicted to poetry, who may have read Chevy-Chase in the nursery or at school, and never since met with the ballad, might be imposed upon by a new Chevy-Chase, bearing no resemblance to the old one, save in here and there a stanza or an incident! Besides, there is something in the severe judgment passed on my countrymen—'that if they do not prefer Scotland to truth, they will always prefer it to inquiry.' When once the Highlanders had adopted the poems of Ossian as an article of national faith, you would far sooner have got them to disavow the Scripture than to abandon a line of the contested tales. *Only* they all allow that Macpherson's translation is very unfaithful, and some pretend to say inferior to the original; by which they can only mean, if they mean any thing, that they miss the charms of the rhythm and vernacular idiom, which pleases the Gaelic natives; for in the real attributes of poetry, Macpherson's version is far superior to any I ever saw of the fragments which he seems to have used.

"The Highland Society have lately set about investigating, or rather, I should say, collecting materials to defend, the authenticity of Ossian. Those researches have only proved that there were no real originals—using that word as is commonly understood—to be found for them. The oldest tale they have found seems to be that of Darthula; but it is perfectly different, both in diction and story, from that of Macpherson. It is, however, a beautiful specimen of Celtic poetry, and shows that it contains much which is worthy of preservation. Indeed, how should it be otherwise, when we know that, till about fifty years ago, the Highlands contained a race of hereditary poets? Is it possible to think, that, among perhaps many hundreds, who for such a course of centuries have founded their reputation and rank on practising the art of poetry in a country where the scenery and manners gave such effect, and interest, and imagery, to their productions, there should not have been some who attained excellence? In searching out those genuine records of the Celtic Muse, and preserving them from oblivion, with all the curious information which they must doubtless contain, I humbly think our Highland antiquaries

would merit better of their country, than by confining their researches to the fantastic pursuit of a chimera.

"I am not to deny that Macpherson's inferiority in other compositions is a presumption that he did not actually compose these poems. But we are to consider his advantage when on his own ground. Macpherson was a Highlander, and had his imagination fired with the charms of Celtic poetry from his very infancy. We know, from constant experience, that most Highlanders, after they have become complete masters of English, continue to *think* in their own language; and it is to me demonstrable that Macpherson *thought* almost every word of Ossian in Gaelic, although he wrote it down in English. The specimens of his early poetry which remain are also deeply tinged with the peculiarities of the Celtic diction and character; so that, in fact, he might be considered as a Highland poet, even if he had not left us some Earse translations (or originals of Ossian) unquestionably written by himself. These circumstances gave a great advantage to him in forming the style of Ossian, which, though exalted and modified according to Macpherson's own ideas of modern taste, is in great part cut upon the model of the tales of the Sennachies and Bards. In the translation of Homer, he not only lost these advantages, but the circumstances on which they are were founded were a great detriment to his undertaking; for although such a dress was appropriate and becoming for Ossian, few people cared to see their old Grecian friend disguised in a tartan plaid and fillibeg. In a word, the style which Macpherson had formed, however admirable in a Highland tale, was not calculated for translating Homer; and it was a great mistake in him, excited, however, by the general applause his first work received, to suppose that there was any thing homogeneous betwixt his own ideas and those of Homer. Macpherson, in his way, was certainly a man of high talents, and his poetic powers as honorable to his country, as the use which he made of them, and I fear his personal character, in other respects, was a discredit to it.

"Thus I have given you, with the utmost sincerity, my creed on the great national question of Ossian; it has been formed after much deliberation and inquiry. I have had for some time thoughts of writing a Highland poem, somewhat in the style of the Lay, giving as far as I can a real picture of what that enthusiastic race actually were before the destruction of their patriarchal government. It is true I have not quite the same facilities as in describing Border manners, where I am, as they say, more at home But to balance my comparative deficiency in knowledge of Celtic manners, you are to consider that I have from my youth delighted in all the Highland traditions which I could pick from the old Jacobites who used to frequent my father's house; and this will, I hope, make some amends for my having less immediate opportunities of research than in the Border tales.

"Agreeably to your advice, I have actually read over Madoc a second time, and, I confess, have seen much beauty which escaped me in the first perusal. *Yet* (which yet, by the way, is almost as vile a monosyllable as *but*) I cannot feel quite the interest I would wish to do. The difference of character which you notice, reminds me of what by Ben Jonson and other old comedians were called *humors*, which consisted rather in the personification of some individual passion or propensity than of an actual individual man. Also, I cannot give up my objection that what was strictly true of Columbus, becomes an unpleasant falsehood when told of some one else. Suppose I was to write a fictitious book of travels, I should certainly do ill to copy exactly the incidents which befell Mungo Park or Bruce of Kinnaird. What was true of them would incontestably prove at once the falsehood and plagiarism of my supposed journal. It is not but what the incidents are natural —but it is their having already happened which strikes us when they are transferred to imaginary persons. Could any one bear the story of a second city being taken by a wooden horse?

"Believe me, I shall not be within many miles of Lichfield, without paying my personal respects to you; and yet I should not do it in prudence, because I am afraid you have formed a higher opinion of me than I deserve; you would expect to see a person who had dedicated himself much to literary pursuits, and you would find me a rattle-skulled half-lawyer, half-sportsman, through whose head a regiment of horse has been exercising since he was five years old; half-educated, half-crazy, as his friends sometimes tell him; half every thing, but *entirely* Miss Seward's much obliged, affectionate, and faithful servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

His correspondence shows how largely he was exerting himself all this while in the service of authors less fortunate than himself. James Hogg, among others, continued to occupy, from time to time, his attention; and he assisted regularly and assiduously, throughout this and the succeeding year, Mr. Robert Jameson, an industrious and intelligent antiquary, who had engaged in editing a collection of ancient popular ballads before the third volume of the Minstrelsy appeared, and who at length published his very curious work in 1807. Meantime, Ashestiel, in place of being less resorted to by literary strangers than Lasswade cottage had been, shared abundantly in the fresh attractions of the Lay, and "booksellers in the plural number" were preceded and followed by an endless variety of en-

thusiastic "gentil bachelors," whose main temptation from the south had been the hope of seeing the Borders in company with their Minstrel. He still writes of himself as "idling away his hours;" he had already learned to appear as if he were doing so to all who had no particular right to confidence respecting the details of his privacy.

But the most agreeable of all his visitants were his own old familiar friends, and one of these has furnished me with a sketch of the autumn life of Ashestiel of which I shall now avail myself. Scott's invitation was in these terms:—

"*To James Skene, Esq., of Rubislaw.*

"Ashestiel, 18th August, 1805.

"Dear Skene,

"I have prepared another edition of the Lay, 1500 strong, moved thereunto by the faith, hope, and charity, of the London booksellers. . . . . If you could, in the interim, find a moment to spend here, you know the way, and the ford is where it was; which, by the way, is more than I expected after Saturday last, the most dreadful storm of thunder and lightning I ever witnessed. The lightning broke repeatedly in our immediate vicinity, *i. e.* betwixt us and the Peel Wood. Charlotte resolved to die in bed like a good Christian. The servants said it was the preface to the end of the world, and I was the only person that maintained my character for stoicism, which I assure you had some merit, as I had no doubt that we were in real danger. It was accompanied with a flood so tremendous that I would have given five pounds you had been here to make a sketch of it. The little Glenkinnon brook was impassable for all the next day, and indeed I have been obliged to send all hands to repair the ford, which was converted into a deep pool. Believe me ever yours affectionately,

W. S."

Mr. Skene says,—

"I well remember the ravages of the storm and flood described in this letter. The ford of Ashestiel was never a good one, and for some time after this it remained not a little perilous. He was himself the first to attempt the passage on his favorite black horse *Captain*, who had scarcely entered the river when he plunged beyond his depth, and had to swim to the other side with his burden. It requires a good horseman to swim a deep and rapid stream, but he trusted to the vigor of his steady trooper, and in spite of his lameness kept his seat manfully. A cart bringing a new kitchen *range* (as I believe the grate for that service is technically called) was shortly after upset in this ugly ford. The

horse and cart were with difficulty got out, but the grate remained for some time in the middle of the stream to do duty as a horse-trap, and furnish subject for many a good joke when Mrs. Scott happened to complain of the imperfection of her kitchen appointments."

Mr. Skene soon discovered an important change which had recently been made in his friend's distribution of his time. Previously it had been his custom, whenever professional business or social engagements occupied the middle part of his day, to seize some hours for study after he was supposed to have retired to bed. His physician suggested that this was very likely to aggravate his nervous headaches, the only malady he was subject to in the prime of his manhood; and, contemplating with steady eye a course not only of unremitting but of increasing industry, he resolved to reverse his plan, and carried his purpose into execution with unflinching energy. In short, he had now adopted the habits in which, with very slender variation, he ever after persevered when in the country. He rose by five o'clock, lit his own fire when the season required one, and shaved and dressed with great deliberation—for he was a very martinet as to all but the mere coxcombries of the toilet, not abhorring effeminate dandyism itself so cordially as the slightest approach to personal slovenliness, or even those "bed-gown and slipper tricks," as he called them, in which literary men are so apt to indulge. Arrayed in his shooting-jacket, or whatever dress he meant to use till dinner time, he was seated at his desk by six o'clock, all his papers arranged before him in the most accurate order, and his books of reference marshalled around him on the floor, while at least one favorite dog lay watching his eye just beyond the line of circumvallation. Thus, by the time the family assembled for breakfast between nine and ten, he had done enough (in his own language) "*to break the neck of the day's work.*" After breakfast a couple of hours more were given to his solitary tasks, and by noon he was, as he used to say, "his own man." When the weather was bad, he would labor incessantly all the morning; but the general rule was to be out and on horseback by one o'clock at the latest; while, if any more distant excursion had been proposed

over-night, he was ready to start on it by ten; his occasional rainy days of unintermitted study forming, as he said, a fund in his favor, out of which he was entitled to draw for accommodation whenever the sun shone with special brightness.

It was another rule, that every letter he received should be answered that same day. Nothing else could have enabled him to keep abreast with the flood of communications that in the sequel put his good nature to the severest test—but already the demands on him in this way also were numerous; and he included attention to them among the necessary business which must be despatched before he had a right to close his writing-box, or, as he phrased it, "to say, *Out, damned spot*, and be a gentleman." In turning over his enormous mass of correspondence, I have almost invariably found some indication that, when a letter had remained more than a day or two unanswered, it had been so because he found occasion for inquiry or deliberate consideration.

I ought not to omit that in those days Scott was far too zealous a dragoon not to take a principal share in the stable duty. Before beginning his desk-work in the morning, he uniformly visited his favorite steed, and neither *Captain* nor *Lieutenant*, nor the lieutenant's successor, *Brown Adam*, (so called after one of the heroes of the Minstrelsy,) liked to be fed except by him. The latter charger was indeed altogether intractable in other hands, though in his the most submissive of faithful allies. The moment he was bridled and saddled, it was the custom to open the stable-door as a signal that his master expected him, when he immediately trotted to the side of the *leaping-on-stone*, of which Scott, from his lameness, found it convenient to make use, and stood there, silent and motionless as a rock, until he was fairly in his seat, after which he displayed his joy by neighing triumphantly through a brilliant succession of curvettings. Brown Adam never suffered himself to be backed but by his master. He broke, I believe, one groom's arm and another's leg in the rash attempt to tamper with his dignity.

Camp was at this time the constant parlor dog. He was very handsome, very intelligent, and naturally very fierce, but gentle as a lamb among the children. As for the more locomotive Douglas and Percy, he kept one window of his study open, whatever might be the state of the weather, that they might leap out and in as the fancy moved them. He always talked to Camp as if he understood what was said—and the animal certainly did understand not a little of it; in particular, it seemed as if he perfectly comprehended, on all occasions, that his master considered him as a sensible and steady friend, the greyhounds as volatile young creatures whose freaks must be borne with.

"Every day," says Mr. Skene, "we had some hours of coursing with the greyhounds, or riding at random over the hills, or of spearing salmon in the Tweed by sunlight: which last sport, moreover, we often renewed at night by the help of torches. This amusement of *burning the water*, as it is called, was not without some hazard, for the large salmon generally lie in the pools, the depths of which it is not easy to estimate with precision by torch-light,—so that not unfrequently, when the sportsman makes a determined thrust at a fish apparently within reach, his eye has grossly deceived him, and instead of the point of the weapon encountering the prey, he finds himself launched, with corresponding vehemence, heels over head into the pool, both spear and salmon gone, the torch thrown out by the concussion of the boat, and quenched in the stream, while the boat itself has of course receded to some distance. I remember, the first time I accompanied our friend, he went right over the gunwale in this manner; and had I not accidentally been close at his side, and made a successful grasp at the skirt of his jacket as he plunged overboard, he must at least have had an awkward dive for it. Such are the contingencies of *burning the water*. The pleasures consist in being penetrated with cold and wet, having your shins broken against the stones in the dark, and perhaps mastering one fish out of every twenty you take aim at."

In all these amusements, but particularly in the *burning of the water*, Scott's most regular companion at this time was John Lord Somerville, who united with many higher qualities a most enthusiastic love for such sports, and consummate address in the prosecution of them. This amiable nobleman then passed his autumns at his pretty seat of Allwyn, or the Pavilion, situated on the Tweed, some eight or nine miles below Ashestiel. They interchanged

visits almost every week; and Scott did not fail to profit largely by his friend's matured and well-known skill in every department of the science of rural economy. He always talked of him, in particular, as his master in the art of planting.

The laird of Rubislaw seldom failed to spend a part of the summer and autumn at Ashestiel, as long as Scott remained there; and during these visits, they often gave a wider scope to their expeditions.

"Indeed," says Mr. Skene, "there are few scenes at all celebrated, either in the history, tradition, or romance of the Border counties, which we did not explore together in the course of our rambles. We traversed the entire vales of the Yarrow and Ettrick, with all their sweet tributary glens, and never failed to find a hearty welcome from the farmers at whose houses we stopped, either for dinner or for the night. He was their chief-magistrate, extremely popular in that official capacity; and nothing could be more gratifying than the frank and hearty reception which every where greeted our arrival, however unexpected. The exhilarating air of the mountains, and the healthy exercise of the day, secured our relishing homely fare; and we found inexhaustible entertainment in the varied display of character which the affability of *the Sheriff* drew forth, on all occasions, in genuine breadth and purity. The beauty of the scenery gave full employment to my pencil, with the free and frequent exercise of which he never seemed to feel impatient. He was at all times ready and willing to alight when any object attracted my notice, and used to seat himself beside me on the brae to con over some ballad appropriate to the occasion, or narrate the tradition of the glen—sometimes, perhaps, to note a passing idea in his pocket-book; but this was rare, for, in general, he relied with confidence on the great storehouse of his memory. And much amusement we had, as you may suppose, in talking over the different incidents, conversations, and traits of manners that had occurred at the last hospitable fireside where we had mingled with the natives. Thus the minutes glided away until my sketch was complete, and then we mounted again with fresh alacrity.

"These excursions derived an additional zest from the uncertainty that often attended the issue of our proceedings; for, following the game started by the dogs, our unfailing comrades, we frequently got entangled and bewildered among the hills, until we had to trust to mere chance for the lodging of the night. Adventures of this sort were quite to his taste, and the more for the perplexities which on such occasions befell our attendant squires, mine a lanky Savoyard, his a portly Scotch butler, both of them uncommonly bad horsemen, and both equally sensitive about their personal dignity, which the ruggedness of the ground often made

it, a matter of some difficulty for either of them to maintain, but more especially for my poor foreigner, whose seat resembled that of a pair of compasses astride. Scott's heavy, lumbering *beauffetier* had provided himself against the mountain-showers with a huge cloak, which, when the cavalcade were at gallop, streamed at full stretch from his shoulders, and kept flapping in the other's face, who, having more than enough to do in preserving his own equilibrium, could not think of attempting at any time to control the pace of his steed, and had no relief but fuming and *pesting* at the *sacré manteau*, in language happily unintelligible to its wearer. Now and then some ditch or turf-fence rendered it indispensable to adventure on a leap; and no farce could have been more amusing than the display of politeness which then occurred between these worthy equestrians, each courteously declining in favor of his friend the honor of the first experiment, the horses fretting impatient beneath them, and the dogs clamoring encouragement. The horses generally terminated the dispute by renouncing allegiance, and springing forward, without waiting the pleasure of the riders, who had to settle the matter with their saddles as they best could.

"One of our earliest expeditions was to visit the wild scenery of the mountainous tract above Moffat, including the cascade of the 'Gray Mare's Tail,' and the dark tarn called Loch Skene.' In our ascent to the lake, we got completely bewildered in the thick fog which generally envelops the rugged features of that lonely region; and, as we were groping through the maze of bogs, the ground gave way, and down went horse and horsemen, pell-mell, into a slough of peaty mud and black water, out of which, entangled as we were with our plaids and foundering nags, it was no easy matter to get extricated. Indeed, unless we had prudently left our gallant steeds at a farm-house below, and borrowed hill-ponies for the occasion, the result might have been worse than laughable. As it was, we rose like the spirits of the bog, covered *cap-à-pie* with slime, to free themselves from which, our wily ponies took to rolling about on the heather, and we had nothing for it but following their example. At length, as we approached the gloomy loch, a huge eagle heaved himself from the margin, and rose right over us, screaming his scorn of the intruders; and altogether it would be impossible to picture any thing more desolately savage than the scene which opened, as if raised by enchantment on purpose to gratify the poet's eye; thick folds of fog rolling incessantly over the face of the inky waters, but rent asunder now in one direction, and then in another,—so as to afford us a glimpse of some projecting rock or naked point of land, or island bearing a few scraggy stumps of pine,—and then closing again, in universal darkness, upon the cheerless waste. Much of the scenery of Old Mortality was drawn from that day's ride.

"It was also in the course of this excursion that we encountered that amusing personage introduced into Guy Mannering as

'Tod Gabbie,' though the appellation by which he was known in the neighborhood was 'Tod Willie.' He was one of those itinerants who gain a subsistence among the moorland farmers by relieving them of foxes, polecats, and the like depredators—a half-witted, stuttering, and most original creature.

"Having explored all the wonders of Moffatdale, we turned ourselves towards *Blackhouse Tower*, to visit Scott's worthy acquaintances the Laidlaws, and reached it after a long and intricate ride, having been again led off our course by the greyhounds, who had been seduced, by a strange dog that joined company, to engage in full pursuit upon the track of what we presumed to be either a fox or a roe-deer. The chase was protracted and perplexing, from the mist that skirted the hill-tops; but at length we reached the scene of slaughter, and were much distressed to find that a stately old he-goat had been the victim. He seemed to have fought a stout battle for his life, but now lay mangled in the midst of his panting enemies, who betrayed, on our approach, strong consciousness of delinquency and apprehension of the lash, which was administered accordingly, to soothe the manes of the luckless Capricorn,—though, after all, the dogs were not so much to blame in mistaking his game flavor, since the fogs must have kept him out of view till the last moment. Our visit to Blackhouse was highly interesting;—the excellent old tenant being still in life, and the whole family group presenting a perfect picture of innocent and simple happiness, while the animated, intelligent, and original conversation of our friend William was quite charming.

"Sir Adam Fergusson and the Ettrick Shepherd were of the party that explored Loch Skene and hunted the unfortunate he-goat.

"I need not tell you that St. Mary's Loch, and the Loch of the Lowes, were among the most favorite scenes of our excursions, as his fondness for them continued to his last days, and we have both visited them many times together in his company. I may say the same of the Teviot, and the Aill, Borthwick-water, and the lonely towers of Buccleuch and Harden, Minto, Roxburgh, Gilnockie, &c. I think it was either in 1805 or 1806 that I first explored the Borthwick with him, when on our way to pass a week at Langholm with Lord and Lady Dalkeith, upon which occasion the otter-hunt, so well described in Guy Mannering, was got up by our noble host; and I can never forget the delight with which Scott observed the enthusiasm of the high-spirited yeomen, who had assembled in multitudes to partake the sport of their dear young chief, well mounted, and dashing about from rock to rock with a reckless ardor which recalled the alacrity of their forefathers in following the Buccleuchs of former days through adventures of a more serious order.

"Whatever the banks of the Tweed, from its source to its termination, presented of interest, we frequently visited; and I do

verily believe there is not a single ford in the whole course of that river which we have not traversed together. He had an amazing fondness for fords, and was not a little adventurous in plunging through, whatever might be the state of the flood, and this even though there happened to be a bridge in view. If it seemed possible to scramble through, he scorned to go ten yards about, and in fact preferred the ford; and it is to be remarked, that most of the heroes of his tales seem to have been endued with similar propensities—even the White Lady of Avenel delights in the ford. He sometimes even attempted them on foot, though his lameness interfered considerably with his progress among the slippery stones. Upon one occasion of this sort, I was assisting him through the Ettrick, and we had both got upon the same tottering stone in the middle of the stream, when some story about a kelpie occurring to him, he must needs stop and tell it with all his usual vivacity—and then, laughing heartily at his own joke, he slipped his foot, or the stone shuffled beneath him, and down he went headlong into the pool, pulling me after him. We escaped, however, with no worse than a thorough drenching and the loss of his stick, which floated down the river, and he was as ready as ever for a similar exploit before his clothes were half dried upon his back."

About this time Mr. and Mrs. Scott made a short excursion to the Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and visited some of their finest scenery, in company with Mr. Wordsworth. I have found no written narrative of this little tour, but I have often heard Scott speak with enthusiastic delight of the reception he met with in the humble cottage which his brother poet then inhabited on the banks of Grasmere; and at least one of the days they spent together was destined to furnish a theme for the verse of each, namely, that which they gave to the ascent of Helvellyn, where, in the course of the preceding spring, a young gentleman having lost his way and perished by falling over a precipice, his remains were discovered, three months afterwards, still watched by "a faithful terrier-bitch, his constant attendant during frequent rambles among the wilds."* This day

* See notice prefixed to the song—

"I climbed the dark brow of the mighty Helvellyn," &c.,

in Scott's Poetical Works, edit. 1834, vol. i. 370; and compare the lines

"Inmate of a mountain dwelling,
Thou hast clomb aloft, and gazed
From the watch-towers of Helvellyn,
Awed, delighted, and amazed," &c.

WORDSWORTH'S *Poetical Works*, 8vo. edit. vol. iii. p. 96.

they were accompanied by an illustrious philosopher, who was also a true poet—and might have been one of the greatest of poets had he chosen; and I have heard Mr. Wordsworth say, that it would be difficult to express the feelings with which he, who so often had climbed Helvellyn alone, found himself standing on its summit with two such men as Scott and Davy.

After leaving Mr. Wordsworth, Scott carried his wife to spend a few days at Gilsland, among the scenes where they had first met; and his reception by the company at the wells was such as to make him look back with something of regret, as well as of satisfaction, to the change that had occurred in his circumstances since 1797. They were, however, enjoying themselves much there, when he received intelligence which induced him to believe that a French force was about to land in Scotland:—the alarm, indeed, had spread far and wide; and a mighty gathering of volunteers, horse and foot, from the Lothians and the Border country, took place in consequence at Dalkeith. He was not slow to obey the summons. He had luckily chosen to accompany on horseback the carriage in which Mrs. Scott travelled. His good steed carried him to the spot of rendezvous, full a hundred miles from Gilsland, within twenty-four hours; and on reaching it, though no doubt to his disappointment the alarm had already blown over, he was delighted with the general enthusiasm that had thus been put to the test—and, above all, by the rapidity with which the yeomen of Ettrick forest had poured down from their glens, under the guidance of his good friend and neighbor, Mr. Pringle of Torwoodlee. These fine fellows were quartered along with the Edinburgh troop when he reached Dalkeith and Musselburgh; and after some sham-battling, and a few evenings of high jollity, had crowned the needless muster of the beacon-fires,* he immediately turned his horse again towards the south, and rejoined Mrs. Scott at Carlisle.

By the way, it was during his fiery ride from Gilsland to

* See Note "Alarm of Invasion," Antiquary, vol. ii. p 338.

Dalkeith, on the occasion above-mentioned, that he composed his Bard's Incantation, first published six years afterwards in the Edinburgh Annual Register :—

> "The forest of Glenmore is drear;
> It is all of black pine and the dark oak-tree," &c.—

and the verses bear the full stamp of the feelings of the moment.

Shortly after he was reëstablished at Ashestiel, he was visited there by Mr. Southey ; this being, I believe, their first meeting. It is alluded to in the following letter—a letter highly characteristic in more respects than one.

"*To George Ellis, Esq., Sunninghill.*

"Ashestiel, 17th October, 1805.

"Dear Ellis,

"More than a month has glided away in this busy solitude, and yet I have never sat down to answer your kind letter. I have only to plead a horror of pen and ink with which this country, in fine weather, (and ours has been most beautiful,) regularly affects me. In recompense, I ride, walk, fish, course, eat and drink, with might and main, from morning to night. I could have wished sincerely you had come to Reged this year to partake her rural amusements ;—the only comfort I have is, that your visit would have been over, and now I look forward to it as a pleasure to come. I shall be infinitely obliged to you for your advice and assistance in the course of Dryden. I fear little can be procured for a Life beyond what Malone has compiled, but certainly his facts may be rather better told and arranged. I am at present busy with the dramatic department. This undertaking will make my being in London in spring a matter of absolute necessity.

"And now let me tell you of a discovery which I have made, or rather which Robert Jameson has made, in copying the MS. of 'True Thomas and the Queen of Elfland,' in the Lincoln cathedral. The queen, at parting, bestows the gifts of harping and carping upon the prophet, and mark his reply—

> 'To harp and carp, Thomas, where so ever ye gen—
> Thomas, take thou these with thee.'—
> 'Harping,' he said, 'ken I nane,
> For Tong is chefe of mynstrelsie.'

If poor Ritson could contradict his own system of materialism by rising from the grave to peep into this MS., he would slink back again in dudgeon and dismay. There certainly cannot be more respectable testimony than that of True Thomas, and you see he

describes the tongue or recitation as the principal, or at least the most dignified, part of a minstrel's profession.

"Another curiosity was brought here a few days ago by Mr. Southey the poet, who favored me with a visit on his way to Edinburgh. It was a MS. containing sundry metrical romances, and other poetical compositions in the northern dialect, apparently written about the middle of the 15th century. I had not time to make an analysis of its contents, but some of them seem highly valuable. There is a tale of Sir Gowther, said to be a Breton Lay, which partly resembles the history of Robert the Devil, the hero being begot in the same way; and partly that of Robert of Sicily, the penance imposed on Sir Gowther being the same, as he kept table with the hounds, and was discovered by a dumb lady to be the stranger knight who had assisted her father the emperor in his wars. There is also a MS. of Sir Isanbras; *item* a poem called Sir Amadas—not Amadis of Gaul, but a courteous knight, who, being reduced to poverty, travels to conceal his distress, and gives the wreck of his fortune to purchase the rites of burial for a deceased knight, who had been refused them by the obduracy of his creditors. The rest of the story is the same with that of Jean de Calais, in the Bibliothèque Bleue, and with a vulgar ballad called the Factor's Garland. Moreover there is a merry tale of hunting a hare, as performed by a set of country clowns, with their mastiffs, and curs with 'short legs and never a tail.' The disgraces and blunders of these ignorant sportsmen must have afforded infinite mirth at the table of a feudal baron, prizing himself on his knowledge of the mysteries of the chase performed by these unauthorized intruders. There is also a burlesque sermon which informs us of Peter and Adam journeying together to Babylon, and how Peter asked Adam *a full great doubtful question*, saying, 'Adam, Adam, why did'st thou eat the apple unpared?' This book belongs to a lady. I would have given something valuable to have had a week of it. Southey commissioned me to say that he intended to take extracts from it, and should be happy to copy, or cause to be copied, any part that you might wish to be possessed of—an offer which I heartily recommend to your early consideration. Where dwelleth Heber the magnificent, whose library and cellar* are so superior to all others in the world? I wish to write to him about Dryden. Any word lately from Jamaica? Yours truly,

W. S."

Mr. Ellis, in his answer, says,—

"Heber will, I dare say, be of service to you in your present undertaking, if indeed you want any assistance, which I very

* Ellis had mentioned, in a recent letter, Heber's buying wines to the value of £1100 at some sale he happened to attend this autumn.

much doubt; because it appears to me that the best edition which could now be given of Dryden, would be one which should unite accuracy of text and a handsome appearance with good critical notes. *Quoad* Malone.—I should think Ritson himself, could he rise from the dead, would be puzzled to sift out a single additional anecdote of the poet's life; but to abridge Malone,—and to render his narrative terse, elegant, and intelligible,—would be a great obligation conferred on the purchasers (I will not say the readers, because I have doubts whether they exist in the plural number) of his very laborious compilation. The late Dr. Wharton, you may have heard, had a project of editing Dryden à la Hurd; that is to say, upon the same principle as the castrated edition of Cowley. His reason was that Dryden, having written for bread, became of necessity a most voluminous author, and poured forth more nonsense of indecency, particularly in his theatrical compositions, than almost any scribbler in that scribbling age. Hence, although his transcendent genius frequently breaks out, and marks the hand of the master, his comedies seem, by a tacit but general consent, to have been condemned to oblivion; and his tragedies, being printed in such bad company, have shared the same fate. But Dr. W. conceived that, by a judicious selection of these, together with his fables and prose works, it would be possible to exhibit him in a more advantageous light than by a republication of the whole mass of his writings. Whether the doctor (who, by the way, was by no means scrupulously chaste and delicate, as you will be aware from his edition of Pope) had taken a just view of the subject, you know better than I; but I must own that the announcement of a *general* edition of Dryden gave me some little alarm. However, if you can suggest the sort of assistance you are desirous of receiving, I shall be happy to do what I can to promote your views. . . . . And so you are not disposed to *nibble* at the bait I throw out! Nothing but 'a decent edition of Hollinshed?' I confess that my project chiefly related to the later historical works respecting this country—to the union of Gall, Twisden, Camden, Leibnitz, &c. &c., leaving the Chronicles, properly so called, to shift for themselves. . . . . I am ignorant when you are to be in Edinburgh, and in that ignorance have not desired Blackburn, who is now at Glasgow, to call on you. He has the best practical understanding I have ever met with, and I vouch that you would be much pleased with his acquaintance. And so for the present God bless you.

G. E."

Scott's letter in reply opens thus:—

"I will not castrate John Dryden. I would as soon castrate my own father, as I believe Jupiter did of yore. What would you say to any man who would castrate Shakspeare, or Massinger, or Beaumont and Fletcher? I don't say but that it may be very

proper to select correct passages for the use of boarding-schools and colleges, being sensible no improper ideas can be suggested in these seminaries, unless they are intruded or smuggled under the beards and ruffs of our old dramatists. But in making an edition of a man of genius's works for libraries and collections,—and such I conceive a complete edition of Dryden to be,—I must give my author as I find him, and will not tear out the page, even to get rid of the blot, little as I like it. Are not the pages of Swift, and even of Pope, larded with indecency, and often of the most disgusting kind, and do we not see them upon all shelves and dressing-tables, and in all boudoirs? Is not Prior the most indecent of tale-tellers, not even excepting La Fontaine, and how often do we see his works in female hands? In fact, it is not passages of ludicrous indelicacy that corrupt the manners of a people—it is the sonnets which a prurient genius like Master Little sings *virginibus puerisque*—it is the sentimental slang, half lewd, half methodistic, that debauches the understanding, inflames the sleeping passions, and prepares the reader to give way as soon as a tempter appears. At the same time, I am not at all happy when I peruse some of Dryden's comedies; they are very stupid, as well as indelicate; sometimes, however, there is a considerable vein of liveliness and humor, and all of them present extraordinary pictures of the age in which he lived. My critical notes will not be very numerous, but I hope to illustrate the political poems, as Absalom and Achitophel, the Hind and Panther, &c. with some curious annotations. I have already made a complete search among some hundred pamphlets of that pamphlet-writing age, and with considerable success, as I have found several which throw light on my author. I am told that I am to be formidably opposed by Mr. Crowe, the Professor of Poetry at Oxford, who is also threatening an edition of Dryden. I don't know whether to be most vexed that some one had not undertaken the task sooner, or that Mr. Crowe is disposed to attempt it at the same time with me;—however, I now stand committed, and will not be *crowed* over, if I can help it. The third edition of the Lay is now in the press, of which I hope you will accept a copy, as it contains some trifling improvements or additions. They are, however, very trifling.

"I have written a long letter to Rees, recommending an edition of our historians, both Latin and English; but I have great hesitation whether to undertake much of it myself. What I can I certainly will do; but I should feel particularly delighted if you would join forces with me, when I think we might do the business to purpose. Do, Lord love you, think of this *grande opus*.

"I have not been so fortunate as to hear of Mr. Blackburn. I am afraid poor Daniel has been very idly employed—*Cœlum non animum*. I am glad you still retain the purpose of visiting Reged. If you live on mutton and game, we can feast you; for, as one wittily said, I am not the hare with many friends, but the friend with many hares —W. S."

Mr. Ellis, in his next letter, says:—

"I will not disturb you by contesting any part of your ingenious apology for your intended *complete* edition of Dryden, whose genius I venerate as much as you do, and whose negligences, as he was not rich enough to doom them to oblivion in his own lifetime, it is perhaps incumbent on his editor to transmit to the latest posterity. Most certainly I am not so squeamish as to quarrel with him for his immodesty on any moral pretence. Licentiousness in writing, when accompanied by wit, as in the case of Prior, La Fontaine, &c., is never likely to excite any *passion*, because every passion is serious; and the grave epistle of Eloisa is more likely to do moral mischief and convey infection to love-sick damsels, than five hundred stories of Hans Carvel and Paulo Purgante; but whatever is in point of expression vulgar—whatever disgusts the taste—whatever might have been written by any fool, and is therefore unworthy of Dryden—whatever might have been suppressed, without exciting a moment's regret in the mind of any of his admirers—*ought*, in my opinion, to be suppressed by any editor who should be disposed to make an appeal to the public taste upon the subject; because a man who was perhaps the best poet and best prose writer in the language——but it is foolish to say so much, after promising to say nothing. Indeed I own *myself* guilty of possessing all his works in a very indifferent edition, and I shall certainly purchase a better one whenever you put it in my power. With regard to your competitors, I feel perfectly at my ease, because I am convinced that though you should generously furnish them with all the materials, they would not know how to use them: *non cuivis hominum contingit* to write critical notes that any one will read."

Alluding to the regret which Scott had expressed some time before, at the shortness of his visit to the libraries of Oxford, Ellis says, in another of these letters—

"A library is like a butcher's shop: it contains plenty of meat, but it is all raw; no person living (Leyden's breakfast was only a *tour de force* to astonish Ritson, and I expect the Abyssinians, whom I never saw) can find a meal in it, till some good cook (suppose yourself) comes in and says, 'Sir, I see by your looks that you are hungry; I know your taste—be patient for a moment, and you shall be satisfied that you have an excellent appetite.'"

I shall not transcribe the mass of letters which Scott received from various other literary friends whose assistance he invoked in the preparation of his edition of Dryden; but among them there occurs one so admirable, that I can-

not refuse myself the pleasure of introducing it, more especially as the views which it opens harmonize as remarkably with some, as they differ from others, of those which Scott himself ultimately expressed respecting the poetical character of his illustrious author.

"Patterdale, Nov. 7, 1805.

"My dear Scott,

"I was much pleased to hear of your engagement with Dryden; not that he is, as a poet, any great favorite of mine: I admire his talents and genius highly, but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical, are a certain ardor and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this, great command of language: *that* he certainly has, and of such language, too, as it is most desirable that a poet should possess, or rather that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden, but as little, I think, as is possible, considering how much he has written. You will easily understand my meaning, when I refer to his versification of Palamon and Arcite, as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity. Whenever his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects, such as the follies, vices, and crimes of classes of men or of individuals. That his cannot be the language of imagination, must have necessarily followed from this,—that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his works; and in his translation from Virgil, wherever Virgil can be fairly said to have had his *eye* upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage.

"But too much of this; I am glad that you are to be his editor. His political and satirical pieces may be greatly benefited by illustration, and even absolutely require it. A correct text is the first object of an editor—then such notes as explain difficult or obscure passages; and lastly, which is much less important, notes pointing out authors to whom the poet has been indebted, not in the fiddling way of phrase here and phrase there—(which is detestable as a general practice)—but where he has had essential obligations either as to matter or manner.

"If I can be of any use to you, do not fail to apply to me. One thing I may take the liberty to suggest, which is, when you come to the fables, might it not be advisable to print the whole of the tales of Boccace in a smaller type in the original language? If this should look too much like swelling a book, I should certainly make such extracts as would show where Dryden has most stri-

kingly improved upon, or fallen below, his original. I think his translations from Boccace are the best, at least the most poetical, of his poems. It is many years since I saw Boccace, but I remember that Sigismunda is not married by him to Guiscard—(the names are different in Boccace in both tales, I believe—certainly in Theodore, &c.) I think Dryden has much injured the story by the marriage, and degraded Sigismunda's character by it. He has also, to the best of my remembrance, degraded her still more by making her love absolute sensuality and appetite; Dryden had no other notion of the passion. With all these defects,—and they are very gross ones,—it is a noble poem. Guiscard's answer, when first reproached by Tancred, is noble in Boccace—nothing but this: *Amor può molto più che ne voi ne io possiamo.* This, Dryden has spoiled. He says first very well, 'The faults of love by love are justified,' and then come four lines of miserable rant, quite *à la Maximim.* Farewell, and believe me ever your affectionate friend,

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH."

CHAPTER IV.

AFFAIR OF THE CLERKSHIP OF SESSION — LETTERS TO ELLIS AND LORD DALKEITH — VISIT TO LONDON — EARL SPENCER AND MR. FOX — CAROLINE, PRINCESS OF WALES — JOANNA BAILLIE — APPOINTMENT AS CLERK OF SESSION — LORD MELVILLE'S TRIAL — SONG ON HIS ACQUITTAL. — 1806.

WHILE the first volumes of his Dryden were passing through the press, the affair concerning the clerkship of the Court of Session, opened nine or ten months before, had not been neglected by the friends on whose counsel and assistance Scott had relied. In one of his Prefaces of 1830, he briefly tells the issue of this negotiation, which he justly describes as "an important circumstance in his life, of a nature to relieve him from the anxiety which he must otherwise have felt, as one upon the precarious tenure of whose own life rested the principal prospects of his family, and especially as one who had necessarily some dependence

on the proverbially capricious favor of the public." Whether Mr. Pitt's hint to Mr. William Dundas, that he would willingly find an opportunity to promote the interests of the author of the Lay, or some conversation between the Duke of Buccleuch and Lord Melville, first encouraged him to this direction of his views, I am not able to state distinctly; but I believe that the desire to see his fortunes placed on some more substantial basis, was at this time partaken pretty equally by the three persons who had the principal influence in the distribution of the crown patronage in Scotland; and as his object was rather to secure a future than an immediate increase of official income, it was comparatively easy to make such an arrangement as would satisfy his ambition. George Home of Wedderburn, in Berwickshire, a gentleman of considerable literary acquirements, and an old friend of Scott's family, had now served as Clerk of Session for upwards of thirty years. In those days, there was no system of retiring pensions for the worn-out functionary of this class; and the usual method was, either that he should resign in favor of a successor who advanced a sum of money according to the circumstances of his age and health, or for a coadjutor to be associated with him in his patent, who undertook the duty on condition of a division of salary. Scott offered to relieve Mr. Home of all the labors of his office, and to allow him, nevertheless, to retain its emoluments entire during his lifetime; and the aged clerk of course joined his exertions to procure a conjoint-patent on these very advantageous terms. Mr. Home resigned, and a new patent was drawn out accordingly; but, by a clerical inadvertency, it was drawn out solely in Scott's favor, no mention of Mr. Home being inserted in the instrument. Although, therefore, the sign-manual had been affixed, and there remained nothing but to pay the fees, and take out the commission, Scott, on discovering this omission, could not, of course, proceed in the business; since, in the event of his dying before Mr. Home, that gentleman would have lost the vested interest which he had stipulated to retain. A pending charge of pecuniary corruption had compelled Lord Melville to retire from office

some time before Mr. Pitt's death; and the cloud of popular obloquy under which he now labored, rendered it impossible that Scott should expect assistance from the quarter to which, under any other circumstances, he would naturally have turned for extrication from this difficulty. He therefore, as soon as the Fox and Grenville Cabinet had been nominated, proceeded to London, to make in his own person such representations as might be necessary to secure the issuing of the patent in the shape originally intended.

It seems wonderful that he should ever have doubted for a single moment of the result; since, had the new Cabinet been purely Whig, and had he been the most notorious and violent of Tory partisans, (neither of which was the case,) the arrangement had been not only virtually, but, with the exception of an evident official blunder, formally completed; and no Secretary of State, as I must think, could have refused to rectify the paltry mistake in question, without a dereliction of every principle of honor. The seals of the Home Office had been placed in the hands of a nobleman of the highest character, moreover, an ardent lover of literature; while the chief of the new Ministry was one of the most generous, as well as tasteful of mankind; and accordingly, when the circumstances were explained, there occurred no hesitation whatever on their parts.

"I had," says Scott, "the honor of an interview with Earl Spencer, and he, in the most handsome manner, gave directions that the commission should issue, as originally intended; adding that, the matter having received the royal assent, he regarded only as a claim of justice what he would willingly have done as an act of favor." He adds, "I never saw Mr. Fox on this or any other occasion, and never made any application to him, conceiving that, in doing so, I might have been supposed to express political opinions different from those which I had always professed. In his private capacity, there is no man to whom I would have been more proud to owe an obligation—had I been so distinguished." *

In January, 1806, however, Scott had by no means measured either the character, the feelings, or the arrange-

* Introduction to Marmion, 1830.

ments of great public functionaries, by the standard with which observation and experience subsequently furnished him. He had breathed hitherto, as far as political questions of all sorts were concerned, the hot atmosphere of a very narrow scene,—and seems to have pictured to himself Whitehall and Downing Street as only a wider stage for the exhibition of the bitter and fanatical prejudices that tormented the petty circles of the Parliament House at Edinburgh; the true bearing and scope of which no man, in after days, more thoroughly understood, or more sincerely pitied. The variation of his feelings, while his business still remained undetermined, will, however, be best collected from the correspondence about to be quoted. It was, moreover, when these letters were written, that he was tasting, for the first time, the full cup of fashionable blandishment as a *London Lion;* nor will the reader fail to observe how deeply, while he supposed his own most important worldly interests to be in peril on the one hand, and was surrounded with so many captivating flatteries on the other, he continued to sympathize with the misfortunes of his early friend and patron, now hurled from power, and subjected to a series of degrading persecutions, from the consequences of which that lofty spirit was never entirely to recover.

"*To George Ellis, Esq., Sunninghill.*

"Edinburgh, January 25th, 1806.

"My dear Ellis,

"I have been too long in letting you hear of me, and my present letter is going to be a very selfish one, since it will be chiefly occupied by an affair of my own, in which, probably, you may find very little entertainment. I rely, however, upon your cordial good wishes, and good advice, though, perhaps, you may be unable to afford me any direct assistance without more trouble than I would wish you to take on my account. You must know, then, that, with a view of withdrawing entirely from the bar, I had entered into a transaction with an elderly and infirm gentleman, Mr. George Home, to be associated with him in the office which he holds as one of the principal clerks to our supreme Court of Session; I being to discharge the duty gratuitously during his life, and to succeed him at his decease. This could only be carried into effect by a new commission from the crown to him and me

jointly, which has been issued in similar cases very lately, and is, in point of form, quite correct. By the interest of my kind and noble friend and chief, the Duke of Buccleuch, the countenance of Government was obtained to this arrangement; and the affair, as I have every reason to believe, is now in the Treasury. I have written to my solicitor, Alexander Mundell, Fludyer Street, to use every despatch in hurrying through the commission; but the news of to-day, giving us every reason to apprehend Pitt's death, if that lamentable event has not already happened,* makes me get nervous on a subject so interesting to my little fortune. My political sentiments have been always constitutional and open, and although they were never rancorous, yet I cannot expect that the Scottish Opposition party, should circumstances bring them into power, would consider me as an object of favor: nor would I ask it at their hands. Their leaders cannot regard me with malevolence, for I am intimate with many of them; but they must provide for the Whiggish children before they throw their bread to the Tory dogs; and I shall not fawn on them because they have in their turn the superintendence of the larder. At the same time, if Fox's friends come into power, it must be with Windham's party, to whom my politics can be no exception,—if the politics of a private individual ought at any time to be made the excuse for intercepting the bounty of his sovereign, when it is in the very course of being bestowed.

"The situation is most desirable, being £800 a-year, besides being consistent with holding my sheriffdom; and I could afford very well to wait till it opened to me by the death of my colleague, without wishing a most worthy and respectable man to die a moment sooner than ripe nature demanded. The duty consists in a few hours' labor in the forenoons when the Court sits, leaving the evenings and whole vacation open for literary pursuits. I will not relinquish the hope of such an establishment without an effort, if it is possible, without dereliction of my principles, to attain the accomplishment of it. As I have suffered in my professional line by addicting myself to the profane and unprofitable art of poem-making, I am very desirous to indemnify myself by availing myself of any prepossession which my literary reputation may, however unmeritedly, have created in my favor. I have found it useful when I applied for others, and I see no reason why I should not try if it can do any thing for myself.

"Perhaps, after all, my commission may be got out before a change of Ministry, if such an event shall take place, as it seems not far distant. If it is otherwise, will you be so good as to think and devise some mode in which my case may be stated to Windham or Lord Grenville, supposing them to come in? If it is not deemed worthy of attention, I am sure I shall be contented; but it is one

* Mr. Pitt died January 23d, two days before this letter was written.

thing to have a right to ask a favor, and another to hope that a transaction, already fully completed by the private parties, and approved of by an existing Administration, shall be permitted to take effect in favor of an unoffending individual. I believe I shall see you very shortly, unless I hear from Mundell that the business can be done for certain without my coming up. I will not, if I can help it, be flayed like a sheep for the benefit of some pettifogging lawyer or attorney. I have stated the matter to you very bluntly; indeed, I am not asking a favor, but, unless my self-partiality blinds me, merely fair play. Yours ever,

WALTER SCOTT."

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"Bath, 6th February, 1806.

"My dear Scott,

"You must have seen by the lists of the new Ministry already published in all the papers, that, although the death of our exellent Minister has been certainly a most unfortunate event, in as far as it must tend to delay the object of your present wishes, there is no cause for your alarm on account of the change, excepting as far as that change is very extensive, and thus, perhaps much time may elapse before the business of every kind which was in arrears can be expedited by the new Administration. There is no change of principle (as far as we can yet judge) in the new Cabinet—or rather the new Cabinet has no general political creed. Lord Grenville, Fox, Lord Lansdowne, and Addington, were the four nominal heads of four distinct parties, which must now by some chemical process be amalgamated; all must forget, if they can, their peculiar habits and opinions, and unite in the pursuit of a common object. How far this is possible, time will show; to what degree this motley Ministry can, by their joint influence, command a majority in the House of Commons; how far they will, *as a whole*, be assisted by the secret influence and power of the Crown; whether, if not so seconded, they will be able to appeal some time hence to the people, and dissolve the Parliament;—all these, and many other questions, will receive very different answers from different speculators. But in the mean time it is self-evident, that every individual will be extremely jealous of the patronage of his individual department; that individually, as well as conjointly, they will be cautious of provoking enmity; and that a measure patronized by the Duke of Buccleuch is not very likely to be opposed by any member of such a Cabinet.

"If, indeed, the object of your wishes were a sinecure, and at the disposal of the Chancellor, (Erskine,) or of the President of the Board of Control, (Lord Minto,) you might have strong cause, per-

haps, for apprehension; but what you ask would suit few candidates, and there probably is not one whom the Cabinet, or any person in it, would feel any strong *interest* in obliging to your disadvantage. But farther, we know that Lord Sidmouth is in the Cabinet; so is Lord Ellenborough, and these two are notoriously the *King's* Ministers. Now we may be very sure that they, or some other of the King's friends, will possess one department, which has no name, but is not the less real; namely, the supervision of the King's influence both here and in Scotland. I therefore much doubt whether there is any man in the Cabinet who, as Minister, has it in his power to prevent your attainment of your object. Lord Melville, we know, *was* in a great measure the representative of the King's personal influence in Scotland, and I am by no means sure that he is no longer so; but be that as it may, it will, I am well persuaded, continue in the hands of some one who has not been forced upon his Majesty as one of his confidential servants.

"Upon the whole, then, the only consolation that I can confidently give you is, that what you represent as a *principal* difficulty is *quite imaginary*, and that your own political principles are exactly those which are most likely to be serviceable to you. I need not say how happy Anne and myself would be to see you, (we shall spend the month of March in London,) nor that, if you should be able to point out any means by which I can be of the slightest use in advancing your interests, you may employ me without reserve. I must go to the Pump-room for my glass of water—so God bless you. Ever truly yours,

G. Ellis."

"*To George Ellis, Esq., Bath.*

"London, Feb. 20, 1806.

"My dear Ellis,

"I have your kind letter, and am infinitely obliged to you for your solicitude in my behalf. I have indeed been rather fortunate, for the gale which has shattered so many goodly argosies, has blown my little bark into the creek for which she was bound, and left me only to lament the misfortunes of my friends. To vary the simile, while the huge frigates, the Moira and Lauderdale, were fiercely combating for the dominion of the Caledonian main, I was fortunate enough to get on board the good ship Spencer, and leave them to settle their disputes at leisure. It is said to be a violent ground of controversy in the new Ministry, which of those two noble lords is to be St. Andrew for Scotland. I own I tremble for the consequences of so violent a temper as Lauderdale's, irritated by long disappointed ambition and ancient feud with all his brother nobles. It is a certain truth that Lord Moira insists upon his claim, backed by all the friends of the late Administration in Scotland, to have a certain weight in that country; and it

is equally certain that the Hamiltons and Lauderdales have struck out. So here are people who have stood in the rain without doors for so many years, quarrelling for the nearest place to the fire, as soon as they have set their feet on the floor. Lord Moira, as he always has been, was highly kind and courteous to me on this occasion.

"Heber is just come in, with your letter waving in his hand. I am ashamed of all the trouble I have given you, and at the same time flattered to find your friendship even equal to that greatest and most disagreeable of all trials, the task of solicitation. Mrs. Scott is *not* with me, and I am truly concerned to think we should be so near, without the prospect of meeting. Truth is, I had half a mind to make a run up to Bath, merely to break the spell which has prevented our meeting for these two years. But Bindley, the collector, has lent me a parcel of books, which he insists on my consulting within the liberties of Westminster, and which I cannot find elsewhere; so that the fortnight I propose to stay will be fully occupied by examination and extracting. How long I may be detained here is very uncertain, but I wish to leave London on Saturday se'ennight. Should I be so delayed as to bring my time of departure any thing near that of your arrival, I will stretch my furlough to the utmost, that I may have a chance of seeing you. Nothing is minded here but domestic politics; and if we are not clean swept, there is no want of new brooms to perform that operation. I have heard very bad news of Leyden's health since my arrival here,—such, indeed, as to give room to apprehend the very worst. I fear he has neglected the precautions which the climate renders necessary, and which no man departs from with impunity. Remember me kindly and respectfully to Mrs. Ellis, and believe me ever yours faithfully,

WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S. Poor Lord Melville! How does he look? We have had miserable accounts of his health in London. He was the architect of my little fortune, from circumstances of personal regard merely; for any of my trifling literary acquisitions were out of his way. My heart bleeds when I think on his situation.

'Even when the rage of battle ceased,
The victor's soul was not appeased.'" *

"*To the Earl of Dalkeith.*

"London, 11th February, 1806.

"My dear Lord,

"I cannot help flattering myself—for perhaps it is flattering myself—that the noble architect of the Border Minstrel's little for-

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* These lines are from Smollett's *Tears of Caledonia.*

tune has been sometimes anxious for the security of that lowly edifice, during the tempest which has overturned so many palaces and towers. If I am right in my supposition, it will give you pleasure to learn that, notwithstanding some little rubs, I have been able to carry through the transaction which your lordship sanctioned by your influence and approbation, and that in a way very pleasing to my own feelings. Lord Spencer, upon the nature of the transaction being explained in an audience with which he favored me, was pleased to direct the commission to be issued, as an act of justice, regretting, he said, it had not been from the beginning his own deed. This was doing the thing handsomely, and like an English nobleman. I have been very much fêted and caressed here, almost, indeed, to suffocation, but have been made amends by meeting some old friends. One of the kindest was Lord Somerville, who volunteered introducing me to Lord Spencer, as much, I am convinced, from respect to your lordship's protection and wishes, as from a desire to serve me personally. He seemed very anxious to do any thing in his power which might evince a wish to be of use to your protegé. Lord Minto was also infinitely kind and active; and his influence with Lord Spencer would, I am convinced, have been stretched to the utmost in my favor, had not Lord Spencer's own view of the subject been perfectly sufficient.

"After all, a little literary reputation is of some use here. I suppose Solomon, when he compared a good name to a pot of ointment, meant that it oiled the hinges of the hall-doors into which the possessors of that inestimable treasure wished to penetrate. What a *good* name was in Jerusalem, a *known* name seems to be in London. If you are celebrated for writing verses or for slicing cucumbers, for being two feet taller or two feet less than any other biped, for acting plays when you should be whipped at school, or for attending schools and institutions when you should be preparing for your grave, your notoriety becomes a talisman—an 'Open Sesame' before which every thing gives way—till you are voted a bore, and discarded for a new plaything. As this is a consummation of notoriety which I am by no means ambitious of experiencing, I hope I shall be very soon able to shape my course northward, to enjoy my good fortune at my leisure, and snap my fingers at the bar and all its works.

"There is, it is believed, a rude scuffle betwixt our late commander-in-chief and Lord Lauderdale, for the patronage of Scotland. If there is to be an exclusive administration, I hope it will not be in the hands of the latter. Indeed, when one considers that, by means of Lords Sidmouth and Ellenborough, the King possesses the actual power of casting the balance between the five Grenvillites and four Foxites who compose the Cabinet, I cannot think they will find it an easy matter to force upon his majesty any one to whom he has a personal dislike. I should therefore

suppose that the disposal of St. Andrew's Cross will be delayed till the new ministry is a little consolidated, *if that time shall ever come.* There is much loose gunpowder amongst them, and one spark would make a fine explosion. Pardon these political effusions; I am infected by the atmosphere which I breathe, and cannot restrain my pen from discussing state affairs. I hope the young ladies and my dear little chief are now recovering from the whooping-cough, if it has so turned out to be. If I can do any thing for any of the family here, you know your right to command, and the pleasure it would afford me to obey. Will your lordship be so kind as to acquaint the Duke, with very grateful and respectful acknowledgment on my part, that I have this day got my commission from the Secretary's office? I dine to-day at Holland-house; I refused to go before, lest it should be thought I was soliciting interest in that quarter, as I abhor even the shadow of changing or turning with the tide.

"I am ever, with grateful acknowledgment, your lordship's much indebted, faithful, humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"London, Saturday, March 3, 1806.

"My dear Ellis,

"I have waited in vain for the happy dissolution of the spell which has kept us asunder at a distance less by one quarter than in general divides us; and, since I am finally obliged to depart for the north to-morrow, I have only to comfort myself with the hope that Bladud will infuse a double influence into his tepid springs, and that you will feel emboldened, by the quantity of reënforcement which the radical heat shall have received, to undertake your expedition to the *tramontane* region of Reged this season. My time has been spent very gayly here, and I should have liked very well to have remained till you came up to town, had it not been for the wife and bairns at home, whom I confess I am now anxious to see. Accordingly, I set off early to-morrow morning—indeed, I expected to have done so to-day; but my companion, Ballantyne, our Scottish Bodoni, was afflicted with a violent diarrhœa, which, though his physician assured him it would serve his health in general, would certainly have contributed little to his accomplishments as an agreeable companion in a post-chaise, which are otherwise very respectable. I own Lord Melville's misfortunes affect me deeply. He, at least his nephew, was my early patron, and gave me countenance and assistance when I had but few friends. I have seen when the streets of Edinburgh were thought by the inhabitants almost too vulgar for Lord Melville to walk upon; and now I fear that, with his power and influence gone, his presence would be accounted by many, from whom he has deserved other thoughts, an embarrassment, if not something worse. All

this is very vile—it is one of the occasions when Providence, as it were, industriously turns the tapestry, to let us see the ragged ends of the worsted which compose its most beautiful figures. God grant your prophecies may be true, which I fear are rather dictated by your kind heart than your experience of political enmities and the fate of fallen statesmen. Kindest compliments to Mrs. Ellis. Your next will find me in Edinburgh.

WALTER SCOTT."

"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"Ashestiel, April 7, 1806.

"My dear Ellis,

"Were I to begin by telling you all the regret I had at not finding you in London, and at being obliged to leave it before your return, this very handsome sheet of paper, which I intend to cover with more important and interesting matters, would be entirely occupied by such a Jeremiade as could only be equalled by Jeremiah himself. I will therefore waive that subject, only assuring you that I hope to be in London next spring, but have much warmer hopes of seeing you here in summer. I hope Bath has been of service; if not so much as you expected, try easy exercise in a northward direction, and make proof of the virtues of the Tweed and Yarrow. We have been here these two days, and I have been quite rejoiced to find all my dogs, and horses, and sheep, and cows, two cottages full of peasants and their children, and all my other stock, human and animal, in great good health—we want nothing but Mrs. Ellis and you to be the strangers within our gates, and our establishment would be complete on the patriarchal plan. I took possession of my new office on my return. The duty is very simple, consisting chiefly in signing my name; and as I have five colleagues, I am not obliged to do duty except in turn; so my task is a very easy one, as my name is very short.

"My principal companion in this solitude is John Dryden. After all, there are some passages in his translations from Ovid and Juvenal that will hardly bear reprinting, unless I would have the Bishop of London and the whole corps of Methodists about my ears. I wish you would look at the passages I mean. One is from the fourth book of Lucretius; the other from Ovid's Instructions to his Mistress. They are not only double-entendres, but good plain single-entendres—not only broad, but long, and as coarse as the mainsail of a first-rate. What to make of them I know not; but I fear that, without absolutely gelding the bard, it will be indispensable to circumcise him a little by leaving out some of the most obnoxious lines. Do pray look at the poems and decide for me. Have you seen my friend Tom Thomson, who is just now in London? He has, I believe, the advantage of knowing you, and I hope you will meet, as he understands more of old books, old laws, and old history, than any man in Scotland. He has lately received an ap-

pointment in Scotland, which puts all our records under his immediate inspection and control, and I expect many valuable discoveries to be the consequence of his investigation, if he escapes being smothered in the cloud of dust which his researches will certainly raise about his ears. I sent your card instantly to Jeffrey, from whom you had doubtless a suitable answer.* I saw the venerable economist and antiquary, Macpherson, when in London, and was quite delighted with the simplicity and kindness of his manners. He is exactly like one of the old Scotchmen whom I remember twenty years ago, before so close a union had taken place between Edinburgh and London. The mail-coach and the Berwick smacks have done more than the Union in altering our national character, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse.

"I met with your friend, Mr. Canning, in town, and claimed his acquaintance as a friend of yours, and had my claim allowed; also Mr. Frere,—both delightful companions, far too good for politics, and for winning and losing places. When I say I was more pleased with their society than I thought had been possible on so short an acquaintance, I pay them a very trifling compliment and myself a very great one. I had also the honor of dining with a fair friend of yours at Blackheath, an honor which I shall very long remember. She is an enchanting princess, who dwells in an enchanted palace, and I cannot help thinking that her prince must labor under some malignant spell when he denies himself her society. The very Prince of the Black Isles, whose bottom was marble, would have made an effort to transport himself to Montague House. From all this you will understand I was at Montague House.

"I am quite delighted at the interest you take in poor Lord Melville. I suppose they are determined to hunt him down. Indeed, the result of his trial must be ruin from the expense, even supposing him to be honorably acquitted. Will you, when you have time to write, let me know how that matter is likely to turn? I am deeply interested in it; and the reports here are so various, that one knows not what to trust to. Even the common rumor of London is generally more authentic than the 'from good authority' of Edinburgh. Besides, I am now in the wilds (alas! I cannot say *woods* and wilds,) and hear little of what passes. Charlotte joins me in a thousand kind remembrances to Mrs. Ellis; and I am ever yours most truly,

WALTER SCOTT."

I shall not dwell at present upon Scott's method of conduct in the circumstances of an eminently popular author

* Mr. Ellis had written to Mr. Jeffrey, through Scott, proposing to write an article for the Edinburgh Review on the Annals of Commerce, then recently published by Mr. David Macpherson.

beleaguered by the importunities of fashionable admirers: his bearing when first exposed to such influences was exactly what it was to the end, and I shall have occasion in the sequel to produce the evidence of more than one deliberate observer.

Caroline, Princess of Wales, was in those days considered among the Tories, whose politics her husband had uniformly opposed, as the victim of unmerited misfortune, cast aside from the mere wantonness of caprice, by a gay and dissolute voluptuary; while the Prince's Whig associates had espoused his quarrel, and were already, as the event showed, prepared to act, publicly as well as privately, as if they believed her to be among the most abandoned of her sex. I know not by whom Scott was first introduced to her little Court at Blackheath; but I think it was probably through Mrs. Hayman, a lady of her bed-chamber, several of whose notes and letters occur about this time in the collection of his correspondence. The careless levity of the Princess's manner was observed by him, as I have heard him say, with much regret, as likely to bring the purity of heart and mind, for which he gave her credit, into suspicion. For example, when, in the course of the evening, she conducted him by himself to admire some flowers in a conservatory, and the place being rather dark, his lameness occasioned him to hesitate for a moment in following her down some steps, which she had taken at a skip, she turned round and said, with mock indignation, "Ah, false and faint-hearted troubadour! you will not trust yourself with me for fear of your neck!"

I find from one of Mrs. Hayman's letters, that on being asked, at Montague House, to recite some verses of his own, he replied that he had none unpublished which he thought worthy of her Royal Highness's attention, but introduced a short account of the Ettrick Shepherd, and repeated one of the ballads of the *Mountain Bard*, for which he was then endeavoring to procure subscribers. The Princess appears to have been interested by the story, and she affected, at all events, to be pleased with the lines; she desired that her name might be placed on the Shep-

herd's list, and thus he had at least one gleam of royal patronage.

It was during the same visit to London that Scott first saw Joanna Baillie, of whose Plays on the Passions he had been, from their first appearance, an enthusiastic admirer. The late Mr. Sotheby, the translator of Oberon, &c. &c., was the mutual friend who introduced him to the poetess of Hampstead. Being asked very lately what impression he made upon her at this interview—"I was at first," she answered, "a little disappointed, for I was fresh from the Lay, and had pictured to myself an ideal elegance and refinement of feature; but I said to myself, If I had been in a crowd, and at a loss what to do, I should have fixed upon that face among a thousand, as the sure index of the benevolence and shrewdness that would and could help me in my strait. We had not talked long, however, before I saw in the expressive play of his countenance far more even of elegance and refinement than I had missed in its mere lines." The acquaintance thus begun, soon ripened into a most affectionate intimacy between him and this remarkable woman; and thenceforth she and her distinguished brother, Dr. Matthew Baillie, were among the friends to whose intercourse he looked forward with the greatest pleasure when about to visit the metropolis.

I ought to have mentioned before, that he had known Mr. Sotheby at a very early period of life, that amiable and excellent man having been stationed for some time at Edinburgh while serving his Majesty as a captain of dragoons. Scott ever retained for him a sincere regard; he was always, when in London, a frequent guest at his hospitable board, and owed to him the personal acquaintance of not a few of their most eminent contemporaries in various departments of literature and art.

When the Court opened after the spring recess, Scott entered upon his new duties as one of the Principal Clerks of Sessions; and as he continued to discharge them with exemplary regularity, and to the entire satisfaction both of the Judges and the Bar, during the long period of twenty-five years, I think it proper to tell precisely in what they

consisted, the more so because, in his letter to Ellis of the 25th January, he has himself (characteristically enough) understated them.

The Court of Session sits at Edinburgh from the 12th of May to the 12th of July, and again from the 12th November, with a short interval at Christmas, to the 12th of March. The Judges of the Inner Court took their places on the Bench, in his time, every morning not later than ten o'clock, and remained according to the amount of business ready for despatch, but seldom for less than four or more than six hours daily; during which space the Principal Clerks continued seated at a table below the Bench to watch the progress of the suits, and record the decisions; the cases, of all classes, being equally apportioned among their number. The Court of Session, however, does not sit on Monday, that day being reserved for the criminal business of the High Court of Justiciary; and there is also another blank day every other week,—the *Teind Wednesday*, as it is called, when the Judges are assembled for the hearing of tithe questions, which belong to a separate jurisdiction, of comparatively modern creation, and having its own separate establishment of officers. On the whole, then, Scott's attendance in Court may be taken to have amounted, on the average, to from four to six hours daily during rather less than six months out of the twelve.

Not a little of the Clerk's business in Court is merely formal, and indeed mechanical; but there are few days in which he is not called upon for the exertion of his higher faculties, in reducing the decisions of the Bench, orally pronounced, to technical shape; which, in a new, complex, or difficult case, cannot be satisfactorily done, without close attention to all the previous proceedings and written documents, an accurate understanding of the principles or precedents on which it has been determined, and a thorough command of the whole vocabulary of legal forms. Dull or indolent men, promoted through the mere wantonness of political patronage, might, no doubt, contrive to devolve the harder part of their duty upon humbler assistants; but, in general, the office had been held by gentlemen of high

character and attainments; and more than one among Scott's own colleagues enjoyed the reputation of legal science that would have done honor to the Bench. Such men, of course, prided themselves on doing well whatever it was their proper function to do; and it was by their example, not that of the drones who condescended to lean upon unseen and irresponsible inferiors, that Scott uniformly modelled his own conduct as a Clerk of Sessions. To do this required, of necessity, constant study of law-papers and authorities at home. There was also a great deal of really base drudgery, such as the authenticating of registered deeds, by signature, which he had to go through out of Court; he had, too, a Shrievalty, though not a heavy one, all the while upon his hands;—and, on the whole, it forms one of the most remarkable features in his history, that, throughout the most active period of his literary career, he must have devoted a large proportion of his hours, during half at least of every year, to the conscientious discharge of professional duties.

Henceforth, then, when in Edinburgh, his literary work was performed chiefly before breakfast—with the assistance of such evening hours as he could contrive to rescue from the consideration of Court papers, and from those social engagements in which, year after year, as his celebrity advanced, he was of necessity more and more largely involved; and of those entire days during which the Court of Session did not sit—days which, by most of those holding the same official station, were given to relaxation and amusement. So long as he continued quarter-master of the Volunteer Cavalry, of course he had, even while in Edinburgh, some occasional horse exercise; but, in general, his town life henceforth was, in that respect, as inactive as his country life ever was the reverse. He scorned for a long while to attach any consequence to this complete alternation of habits; but we shall find him confessing in the sequel, that it proved highly injurious to his bodily health.

I may here observe that the duties of his clerkship brought him into close daily connection with a set of

gentlemen, most of whom were soon regarded by him with a most cordial affection and confidence. Among his fellow-clerks were David Hume (the nephew of the historian) whose lectures on the Law of Scotland are characterized with just eulogy in the Ashestiel Memoir, and who subsequently became a Baron of the Exchequer; a man as virtuous and amiable as conspicuous for masculine vigor of intellect and variety of knowledge. Another was Hector Macdonald Buchanan of Drummakiln, a frank-hearted and generous gentleman, not the less acceptable to Scott for the Highland prejudices which he inherited with the high blood of Clanranald; at whose beautiful seat of Ross Priory, on the shores of Lochlomond, he was henceforth almost annually a visitor—a circumstance which has left many traces in the Waverley Novels. A third, (though I believe of later appointment,) with whom his intimacy was not less strict, was the late excellent Sir Robert Dundas, of Beechwood, Bart.; and a fourth was the friend of his boyhood, one of the dearest he ever had, Colin Mackenzie of Portmore. With these gentlemen's families he and his lived in such constant familiarity of kindness, that the children all called their fathers' colleagues *uncles*, and the mothers of their little friends, *aunts;* and in truth, the establishment was a brotherhood.

Scott's nomination as Clerk of Session appeared in the same Gazette (March 8, 1806) which announced the instalment of the Hon. Henry Erskine and John Clerk of Eldin as Lord Advocate and Solicitor-General for Scotland. The promotion, at such a moment, of a distinguished Tory, might well excite the wonder of the Parliament House; and even when the circumstances were explained, the inferior local adherents of the triumphant cause were far from considering the conduct of their superiors in this matter with feelings of satisfaction. The indication of such humors was deeply resented by his haughty spirit; and he in his turn showed his irritation in a manner well calculated to extend to higher quarters the spleen with which his advancement had been regarded by persons wholly unworthy of his attention. In short, it was almost immediately after

a Whig Ministry had gazetted his appointment to an office which had for twelve months formed a principal object of his ambition, that, rebelling against the implied suspicion of his having accepted something like a personal obligation at the hands of adverse politicians, he for the first time put himself forward as a decided Tory partisan.

The impeachment of Lord Melville was among the first measures of the new Government; and personal affection and gratitude graced as well as heightened the zeal with which Scott watched the issue of this, in his eyes, vindictive proceeding; but, though the ex-minister's ultimate acquittal was, as to all the charges involving his personal honor, complete, it must now be allowed that the investigation brought out many circumstances by no means creditable to his discretion; and the rejoicing of his friends ought not, therefore, to have been scornfully jubilant. Such they were, however,—at least in Edinburgh; and Scott took his share in them by inditing a song, which was sung by James Ballantyne, and received with clamorous applauses, at a public dinner given in honor of the event, on the 27th of June, 1806. I regret that this piece was inadvertently omitted in the late collective edition of his poetical works; but since such is the case, I consider myself bound to insert it here. However he may have regretted it afterwards, he authorized its publication in the newspapers of the time, and my narrative would fail to convey a complete view of the man, if I should draw a veil over the expression, thus deliberate, of some of the strongest personal feelings that ever animated his verse.

"HEALTH TO LORD MELVILLE.

AIR—*Carrickfergus.*

"Since here we are set in array round the table,
Five hundred good fellows well met in a hall,
Come listen, brave boys, and I'll sing as I'm able
How innocence triumphed and pride got a fall.
But push round the Claret—
Come, stewards, don't spare it—
With rapture you'll drink to the toast that I give:
Here, boys,
Off with it merrily
MELVILLE forever, and long may he live!

"What were the Whigs doing, when, boldly pursuing,
PITT banished Rebellion, gave Treason a string?
Why, they swore, on their honor, for ARTHUR O'CONNOR,
And fought hard for DESPARD against country and king
Well, then, we knew, boys,
PITT and MELVILLE were true boys,
And the tempest was raised by the friends of Reform.
Ah, woe!
Weep to his memory;
Low lies the pilot that weathered the storm!

"And pray, don't you mind when the Blues first were raising,
And we scarcely could think the house safe o'er our heads?
When villains and coxcombs, French politics praising,
Drove peace from our tables and sleep from our beds?
Our hearts they grew bolder,
When, musket on shoulder,
Stepped forth our old Statesman example to give.
Come, boys, never fear,
Drink the Blue grenadier—
Here's to old HARRY, and long may he live!

"They would turn us adrift; though rely, sir, upon it—
Our own faithful chronicles warrant us that
The free mountaineer and his bonny blue bonnet
Have oft gone as far as the regular's hat.
We laugh at their taunting,
For all we are wanting
Is license our life for our country to give.
Off with it merrily,
Horse, foot, and artillery,—
Each loyal Volunteer, long may he live.

"'Tis not us alone, boys—the Army and Navy
Have each got a slap 'mid their politic pranks;
CORNWALLIS cashiered, that watched winters to save ye,
And the Cape called a bauble, unworthy of thanks.
But vain is their taunt;
No soldier shall want
The thanks that his country to valor can give:
Come, boys,
Drink it off merrily,—
SIR DAVID and POPHAM, and long may they live!

'And then our revenue—Lord knows how they viewed it
While each petty Statesman talked lofty and big;
But the beer-tax was weak, as if Whitbread had brewed it,
And the pig-iron duty a shame to a pig.
In vain is their vaunting;
Too surely there's wanting
What judgment, experience, and steadiness give;
Come, boys,
Drink about merrily,—
Health to sage MELVILLE, and long may he live!

"Our King, too—our Princess—I dare not say more, sir,—
May Providence watch them with mercy and might!
While there's one Scottish hand that can wag a claymore, sir,
They shall ne'er want a friend to stand up for their right.
Be damned he that dare not,—
For my part, I'll spare not
To beauty afflicted a tribute to give:
Fill it up steadily,
Drink it off readily,—
Here's to the Princess, and long may she live.

"And since we must not set Auld Reikie in glory,
And make her brown visage as light as her heart;*
Till each man illumine his own upper story,
Nor law-book nor lawyer shall force us to part.
In GRENVILLE and SPENCER,
And some few good men, sir,
High talents we honor, slight difference forgive:
But the Brewer we'll hoax,
Tallyho to the Fox,
And drink MELVILLE forever, as long as we live."

This song gave great offence to the many sincere personal friends whom Scott numbered among the upper ranks of the Whigs; and, in particular, it created a marked coldness towards him on the part of the accomplished and amiable Countess of Rosslyn, (a very intimate friend of his favorite patroness, Lady Dalkeith,) which, as his letters show, wounded his feelings severely,—the more so, I have no doubt, because a little reflection must have made him repent not a few of its allusions. He was consoled, however, by abundant testimonies of Tory approbation; and, among others, by the following note from Mr. Canning:—

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"London, July 14, 1806.

"Dear Sir,

"I should not think it necessary to trouble you with a direct acknowledgment of the very acceptable present which you were so good as to send me through Mr. William Rose, if I had not happened to hear that some of those persons who could not indeed be expected to be pleased with your composition, have thought proper to be very loud and petulant in the expression of their dis-

* The Magistrates of Edinburgh had rejected an application for illumination of the town, on the arrival of the news of Lord Melville's acquittal.

approbation. Those, therefore, who approve and are thankful for your exertions in a cause which they have much at heart, owe it to themselves, as well as to you, that the expressions of their gratitude and pleasure should reach you in as direct a manner as possible. I hope that, in the course of next year, you are likely to afford your friends in this part of the world an opportunity of repeating these expressions to you in person; and I have the honor to be, dear sir, with great truth, your very sincere and obedient servant,

GEORGE CANNING."

Scott's Tory feelings appear to have been kept in a very excited state during the whole of this short reign of the Whigs. He then, for the first time, mingled keenly in the details of county politics,—canvassed electors—harangued meetings; and, in a word, made himself conspicuous as a leading instrument of his party—more especially as an indefatigable local manager, wherever the parliamentary interest of the Buccleuch family was in peril. But he was, in truth, earnest and serious in his belief that the new rulers of the country were disposed to abolish many of its most valuable institutions; and he regarded with special jealousy certain schemes of innovation with respect to the courts of law and the administration of justice, which were set on foot by the crown officers of Scotland. At a debate of the Faculty of Advocates on some of these propositions, he made a speech much longer than any he had ever before delivered in that assembly; and several who heard it have assured me, that it had a flow of energy and eloquence for which those who knew him best had been quite unprepared. When the meeting broke up, he walked across *the Mound*, on his way to Castle Street, between Mr. Jeffrey and another of his reforming friends, who complimented him on the rhetorical powers he had been displaying, and would willingly have treated the subject-matter of the discussion playfully. But his feelings had been moved to an extent far beyond their apprehension: he exclaimed, "No, no—'tis no laughing matter; little by little, whatever your wishes may be, you will destroy and undermine, until nothing of what makes Scotland Scotland shall remain." And so saying, he turned round to conceal his agitation—but not until Mr. Jeffrey

saw tears gushing down his cheek—resting his head until he recovered himself on the wall of the mound. Seldom, if ever, in his more advanced age, did any feelings obtain such mastery.

CHAPTER V.

DRYDEN—CRITICAL PIECES—EDITION OF SLINGSBY'S MEMOIRS, &c.—MARMION BEGUN—VISIT TO LONDON—ELLIS—ROSE—CANNING—MISS SEWARD—SCOTT SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION ON SCOTCH JURISPRUDENCE—LETTERS TO SOUTHEY, &c.—PUBLICATION OF MARMION—ANECDOTES—THE EDINBURGH REVIEW ON MARMION.—1806–1808.

During the whole of 1806 and 1807, Dryden continued to occupy the greater share of Scott's literary hours; but in the course of the former year he found time and, notwithstanding all these political bickerings, inclination to draw up three papers for the Edinburgh Review; viz. one on the poems and translations of the Hon. William Hebert; a second, more valuable and elaborate, in which he compared the "*Specimens* of Early English Romances," by Ellis, with the "*Selection* of Ancient English Metrical Romances," by Ritson; and, lastly, that exquisite piece of humor, his article on the Miseries of Human Life, to which Mr. Jeffrey added some, if not all, of the *Reviewers' Groans* with which it concludes. It was in September, 1806, too, that Messrs. Longman put forth, in a separate volume, those of his own ballads which, having been included in the Minstrelsy, were already their property, together with a collection of his "Lyrical Pieces;" for which he received £100. This publication, obviously suggested by the continued popularity of the Lay, was highly successful, seven thousand copies having been disposed of before the first collective edition of his poetical works appeared. He had also

proposed to include the House of Aspen in the same volume, but on reflection once more laid his prose tragedy aside. About the same time he issued, though without his name, a miscellaneous volume, entitled, "Original Memoirs written during the Great Civil Wars; being the Life of Sir Henry Slingsby, and Memoirs of Captain Hodgson, with Notes," &c. Scott's preface consists of a brief but elegant and interesting biography of the gallant cavalier Slingsby; his notes are few and unimportant. This volume (by which he gained nothing as editor) was put forth in October by Messrs. Constable; and in November, 1806, he began *Marmion*, the publication of which was the first important business of his in which that enterprising firm had a primary part.

He was at this time in frequent communication with several leading booksellers, each of whom would willingly have engrossed his labors; but from the moment that his literary undertakings began to be serious, he seems to have resolved against forming so strict a connection with any one publisher, as might at all interfere with the freedom of his transactions. I think it not improbable that his interests as the partner of Ballantyne may have had some influence in this part of his conduct; at all events, there can be little doubt that the hope of sharing more and more in the profits of Scott's original works induced the competing booksellers to continue and extend their patronage of the Edinburgh printer, who had been introduced to their notice as the personal friend of the most rising author of the day. But, nevertheless, I can have no doubt that Scott was mainly guided by his love of independence. It was always his maxim, that no author should ever let any one house fancy that they had obtained a right of monopoly over his works —or, as he expressed it in the language of the Scotch feudalists, "that they had completely thirled him to their mill;" and through life, as we shall see, the instant he perceived the least trace of this feeling, he asserted his freedom, not by word, but by some decided deed, on whatever considerations of pecuniary convenience the step might make it necessary for him to trample. Of the conduct of

Messrs. Longman, who had been principally concerned in the Minstrelsy, the Lay, Sir Tristrem, and the Ballads, he certainly could have had no reason to complain; on the contrary, he has, in various places, attested that it was liberal and handsome beyond his expectation; but, nevertheless, a negotiation which they now opened proved fruitless, and ultimately they had no share whatever in the second of his original works.

Constable offered a thousand guineas for the poem very shortly after it was begun, and without having seen one line of it; and Scott, without hesitation, accepted this proposal. It may be gathered from the Introduction of 1830, that private circumstances of a delicate nature rendered it highly desirable for him to obtain the immediate command of such a sum; the price was actually paid long before the poem was published; and it suits very well with Constable's character to suppose that his readiness to advance the money may have outstripped the calculations of more established dealers, and thus cast the balance in his favor. He was not, however, so unwise as to keep the whole adventure to himself. His bargain being fairly concluded, he tendered one fourth of the copy-right to Mr. Miller of Albemarle Street, and another to Mr. Murray, then of Fleet Street, London; and both these booksellers appear to have embraced his proposition with eagerness. "I am," Murray wrote to Constable, on the 6th February, 1807, "truly sensible of the kind remembrance of me in your liberal purchase. You have rendered Mr. Miller no less happy by your admission of him; and we both view it as honorable, profitable, and glorious to be concerned in the publication of a new poem by Walter Scott." The news that a thousand guineas had been paid for an unseen and unfinished MS. appeared in those days portentous; and it must be allowed that the writer who received such a sum for a performance in embryo, had made a great step in the hazards, as well as in the honors, of authorship.

The private circumstances which he alludes to as having precipitated his reappearance as a poet were connected

with his brother Thomas's final withdrawal from the profession of a Writer to the Signet, which arrangement seems to have become quite necessary towards the end of 1806; but it is extremely improbable that, in the absence of any such occurrence, a young, energetic, and ambitious man would have long resisted the cheering stimulus of such success as had attended the Lay of the Last Minstrel.

"I had formed," he says, "the prudent resolution to bestow a little more labor than I had yet done on my productions, and to be in no hurry again to announce myself as a candidate for literary fame. Accordingly, particular passages of a poem which was finally called 'Marmion,' were labored with a good deal of care by one by whom much care was seldom bestowed. Whether the work was worth the labor or not, I am no competent judge; but I may be permitted to say, that the period of its composition was a very happy one in my life; so much so, that I remember with pleasure at this moment (1830) some of the spots in which particular passages were composed. It is probably owing to this that the introductions to the several cantos assumed the form of familiar epistles to my intimate friends, in which I alluded, perhaps more than was necessary or graceful, to my domestic occupations and amusements—a loquacity which may be excused by those who remember that I was still young, light-headed and happy, and that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*" *

The first four of the Introductory Epistles are dated Ashestiel, and they point out very distinctly some of the "spots" which, after the lapse of so many years, he remembered with pleasure, for their connection with particular passages of Marmion. There is a knoll with some tall old ashes on the adjoining farm of the Peel, where he was very fond of sitting by himself, and it still bears the name of the *Sheriff's knowe*. Another favorite seat was beneath a huge oak hard by the Tweed, at the extremity of the *haugh* of Ashestiel. It was here, that, while meditating his verses, he used

> "to stray,
> And waste the solitary day
> In plucking from yon fen the reed,
> And watch it floating down the Tweed;

* Introduction to Marmion, 1830.

Or idly list the shrilling lay
With which the milkmaid cheers her way,
Marking its cadence rise and fail,
As from the field, beneath her pail,
She trips it down the uneven dale."

He frequently wandered far from home, however, attended only by his dog, and would return late in the evening, having let hours after hours slip away among the soft and melancholy wildernesses where Yarrow creeps from her fountains. The lines,

"Oft in my mind such thoughts awake,
By lone St. Mary's silent lake," &c.,

paint a scene not less impressive than what Byron found amidst the gigantic pines of the forest of Ravenna; and how completely does he set himself before us in the moment of his gentler and more solemn inspiration, by the closing couplet,

"Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,
So stilly is the solitude."

But when the theme was of a more stirring order, he enjoyed pursuing it over brake and fell at the full speed of his *Lieutenant*. I well remember his saying, as I rode with him across the hills from Ashestiel to Newark one day in his declining years—"Oh, man, I had many a grand gallop among these braes when I was thinking of Marmion, but a trotting canny pony must serve me now." His friend, Mr. Skene, however, informs me that many of the more energetic descriptions, and particularly that of the battle of Flodden, were struck out while he was in quarters again with his cavalry, in the autumn of 1807. "In the intervals of drilling," he says, "Scott used to delight in walking his powerful black steed up and down by himself upon the Portobello sands, within the beating of the surge; and now and then you would see him plunge in his spurs and go off as if at the charge, with the spray dashing about him. As we rode back to Musselburgh, he often came and placed himself beside me to repeat the verses that he had been composing during these pauses of our exercise."

He seems to have communicated fragments of the poem very freely during the whole of its progress. As early as the 22d February, 1807, I find Mrs. Hayman acknowledging, in the name of the Princess of Wales, the receipt of a copy of the Introduction to Canto III., in which occurs the tribute to Her Royal Highness's heroic father, mortally wounded the year before at Jena—a tribute so grateful to her feelings that she herself shortly after sent the poet an elegant silver vase as a memorial of her thankfulness. And about the same time the Marchioness of Abercorn expresses the delight with which both she and her lord had read the generous verses on Pitt and Fox, in another of those epistles. But his connection with this noble family was no new one; for his father, and afterwards his brother Thomas, had been the auditors of their Scotch rental.

In March, his researches concerning Dryden carried him again to the south. During several weeks he gave his day pretty regularly to the pamphlets and MSS. of the British Museum, and the evening to the brilliant societies that now courted him whenever he came within their sphere. His recent political demonstrations during the brief reign of the Whigs, seem to have procured for him on this occasion a welcome of redoubled warmth among the leaders of his own now once more victorious party. "As I had," he writes to his brother-in-law, in India, "contrary to many who avowed the same opinions in sunshine, held fast my integrity during the Foxite's interval of power, I found myself of course very well with the new administration." But he uniformly reserved his Saturday and Sunday either for Mr. Ellis, at Sunninghill, or Lord and Lady Abercorn, at their beautiful villa near Stanmore; and the press copy of Cantos I. and II. of Marmion attests that most of it reached Ballantyne in sheets, franked by the Marquis, or his son-in-law, Lord Aberdeen, during April, 1807.

Before he turned homeward he made a short visit to his friend William Stewart Rose, at his cottage of Gundimore, in Hampshire, and enjoyed in his company various long rides in the New Forest, a day in the dock-yard of Ports-

mouth, and two or three more in the Isle of Wight.* Several sheets of the MS., and corrected proofs of Canto III., are also under covers franked from Gundimore by

* I am sure I shall gratify every reader by extracting some lines, alluding to Scott's visit at Mr. Rose's Marine Villa, from an unpublished poem, entitled "Gundimore," kindly placed at my disposal by his host.

"Here Walter Scott has wooed the northern muse;
Here he with me has joyed to walk or cruise;
And hence has pricked through Yten's holt, where we
Have called to mind how under greenwood tree,
Pierced by the partner of his 'woodland craft,'
King Rufus fell by Tyrrell's random shaft.
Hence have we ranged by Celtic camps and barrows,
Or climbed the expectant bark, to thread the Narrows
Of Hurst, bound westward to the gloomy bower
Where Charles was prisoned in yon Island tower;
Or from a longer flight alighted where
Our navies to recruit their strength repair—
And there have seen the ready shot and gun;
Seen in red stream the molten copper run;
And massive anchor forged, whose iron teeth
Should hold the three-decked ship when billows seethe;
And when the arsenal's dark stithy rang
With the loud hammers of the Cyclop-gang,
Swallowing the darkness up, have seen with wonder,
The flashing fire, and heard fast following thunder.
Here, witched from summer sea and softer reign,
Foscolo courted Muse of milder strain.
On these ribbed sands was Coleridge pleased to pace,
While ebbing seas have hummed a rolling base
To his rapt talk. Alas! all these are gone,
'And I and other creeping things live on.'
The flask no more, dear Walter, shall I quaff
With thee, no more enjoy thy hearty laugh.
No more shalt thou to me extend thy hand,
A welcome pilgrim to my father's land!
* * * *
Alone such friends and comrades I deplore,
And peopled but with phantoms is the shore:
Hence have I fled my haunted beach; yet so
Would not alike a sylvan home forego.
Though wakening fond regrets its sere and yellow
Leaves, and sweet inland murmur, serve to mellow
And soothe the sobered sorrow they recall,
When mantled in the faded garb of fall;—
But wind and wave—unlike the sighing sedge
And murmuring leaf—gave grief a coarser edge·
And in each howling blast my fancy hears
'The voices of the dead, and songs of other years.'"

Mr. Rose; and I think I must quote the note which accompanied one of these detachments, as showing the good-natured buoyancy of mind and temper with which the poet received in every stage of his progress the hints and suggestions of his watchful friends, Erskine and Ballantyne. The latter having animadverted on the first draught of the song "Where shall the Lover rest," and sketched what he thought would be a better arrangement of the stanza—Scott answers as follows:—

"Dear James,

"I am much obliged to you for the rhymes. I presume it can make no difference as to the air if the first three lines rhyme; and I wish to know, with your leisure, if it is absolutely necessary that the fourth should be out of poetic rhythm, as 'the deserted fair one' certainly is.—For example, would this do?

'Should my heart from thee falter,
To another love alter,
(For the rhyme we'll say Walter,)
Deserting my lover.'

There is here the same number of syllables, but arranged in cadence. I return the proof, and send more copy. There will be six Cantos. Yours truly,

W. S."

In the first week of May, we find him at Lichfield, having diverged from the great road to Scotland for the purpose of visiting Miss Seward. Her account of her old correspondent, whom till now she had never seen, was addressed to Mr. Cary, the translator of Dante; and it may interest the reader to compare it with other similar sketches of earlier and later date.

"On Friday last," she says, "the poetically great Walter Scott came 'like a sunbeam to my dwelling.' This proudest boast of the Caledonian muse is tall, and rather robust than slender, but lame in the same manner as Mr. Hayley, and in a greater measure. Neither the contour of his face nor yet his features are elegant; his complexion healthy, and somewhat fair, without bloom. We find the singularity of brown hair and eyelashes, with flaxen eyebrows, and a countenance open, ingenuous, and benevolent. When seriously conversing or earnestly attentive, though his eyes are rather of a lightish gray, deep thought is on their lids: he contracts his brow, and the rays of genius gleam aslant from the orbs beneath them. An upper lip too long prevents his mouth from

being decidedly handsome, but the sweetest emanations of temper and heart play about it when he talks cheerfully or smiles; and in company he is much oftener gay than contemplative. His conversation—an overflowing fountain of brilliant wit, apposite allusion, and playful archness—while on serious themes it is nervous and eloquent; the accent decidedly Scotch, yet by no means broad. On the whole, no expectation is disappointed which his poetry must excite in all who feel the power and graces of human inspiration. . . . . Not less astonishing than was Johnson's memory is that of Mr. Scott; like Johnson, also, his recitation is too monotonous and violent to do justice either to his own writings or those of others. The stranger guest delighted us all by the unaffected charms of his mind and manners. Such visits are among the most highprized honors which my writings have procured for me."

Miss Seward adds, that she showed him the passage in Cary's Dante where Michael Scott occurs, and that, though he admired the spirit and skill of the version, he confessed his inability to find pleasure in the Divina Comedia. "The plan," he said, "appeared to him unhappy; the personal malignity and strange mode of revenge presumptuous and uninteresting."

By the 12th of May he was at Edinburgh for the commencement of the summer session, and the printing seems thenceforth to have gone on at times with great rapidity, at others slowly and irregularly; the latter Cantos having, no doubt, been merely blocked out when the first went to press, and his professional avocations, but above all, his Dryden, occasioning frequent interruptions. Just a year had elapsed from his beginning the poem when he penned the Epistle for Canto IV. at Ashestiel; and who, that considers how busily his various pursuits and labors had been crowding the interval, can wonder to be told that

> "Even now, it scarcely seems a day
> Since first I tuned this idle lay—
> A task so often laid aside,
> When leisure graver cares denied—
> That now November's dreary gale,
> Whose voice inspired my opening tale,
> That same November gale once more
> Whirls the dry leaves on Yarrow shore."

The fifth Introduction was written in Edinburgh in the month following; that to the last Canto, during the Christ-

mas festivities of Mertoun-house, where, from the first days of his ballad-rhyming down to the close of his life, he, like his bearded ancestor, usually spent that season with the immediate head of the race. The bulky appendix of notes, including a mass of curious antiquarian quotations, must have moved somewhat slowly through the printer's hands; but Marmion was at length ready for publication by the middle of February, 1808.

Among the "graver cares" which he alludes to as having interrupted his progress in the poem, the chief were, as has been already hinted, those arising from the pecuniary embarrassments of his brother. These are mentioned in a letter to Miss Seward, dated in August, 1807. The lady had, among other things, announced her pleasure in the prospect of a visit from the author of "Madoc," expressed her admiration of "Master Betty, the Young Roscius," and lamented the father's design of placing that "miraculous boy" for three years under a certain "schoolmaster of eminence at Shrewsbury." * Scott says in answer:—

"Since I was favored with your letter, my dear Miss Seward, I have brought the unpleasant transactions to which my last letter alluded pretty near to a conclusion much more fortunate than I had ventured to hope. Of my brother's creditors, those connected with him by blood or friendship, showed all the kindness which those ties are in Scotland peculiarly calculated to produce; and, what is here much more uncommon, those who had no personal connection with him or his family, showed a liberality which would not have misbecome the generosity of the English. Upon the whole, his affairs are put in a course of management which I hope will enable him to begin life anew with renovated hopes, and not entirely destitute of the means of recommencing business.

"I am very happy—although a little jealous withal—that you are to have the satisfaction of Southey's personal acquaintance. I am certain you will like the Epic bard exceedingly. Although he does not deign to enter into the mere trifling intercourse of society, yet, when a sympathetic spirit calls him forth, no man talks with more animation on literary topics; and perhaps no man in England has read and studied so much, with the same powers of making use of the information which he is so indefatigable in acquiring. I despair of reconciling you to my little friend Jeffrey, although I think I could trust to his making some impression on your prepossession, were you to converse with him. I think

* See Miss Seward's Letters, vol. vi. p. 364.

Southey does himself injustice in supposing the Edinburgh Review, or any other, could have sunk Madoc, even for a time. But the size and price of the work, joined to the frivolity of an age which must be treated as nurses humor children, are sufficient reasons why a poem, on so chaste a model, should not have taken immediately. We know the similar fate of Milton's immortal work, in the witty age of Charles II., at a time when poetry was much more fashionable than at present. As to the division of the profits, I only think that Southey does not understand the gentlemen of *the trade*, emphatically so called, as well as I do. Without any greater degree of *fourberie* than they conceive the long practice of their brethren has rendered matter of prescriptive right, they contrive to clip the author's proportion of profits down to a mere trifle. It is the tale of the fox that went a hunting with the lion, upon condition of equal division of the spoil; and yet I do not quite blame the booksellers, when I consider the very singular nature of their *mystery*. A butcher generally understands something of black cattle, and woe betide the jockey who should presume to exercise his profession without a competent knowledge of horse-flesh. But whoever heard of a bookseller pretending to understand the commodity in which he dealt? They are the only tradesmen in the world who professedly, and by choice, deal in what is called 'a pig in a poke.' When you consider the abominable trash which, by their sheer ignorance, is published every year, you will readily excuse them for the indemnification which they must necessarily obtain at the expense of authors of some value. In fact, though the account between an individual bookseller and such a man as Southey may be iniquitous enough, yet I apprehend that, upon the whole, the account between *the trade* and the authors of Britain at large is pretty fairly balanced; and what these gentlemen gain at the expense of one class of writers, is lavished, in many cases, in bringing forward other works of little value. I do not know but this, upon the whole, is favorable to the cause of literature. A bookseller publishes twenty books, in hopes of hitting upon one good speculation, as a person buys a parcel of shares in a lottery, in hopes of gaining a prize. Thus the road is open to all; and if the successful candidate is a little fleeced, in order to form petty prizes to console the losing adventurers, still the cause of literature is benefited, since none is excluded from the privilege of competition. This does not apologize for Southey's carelessness about his interest—for,

> —— 'his name *is* up, and may go
> From Toledo to Madrid.'

"Pray, don't trust Southey too long with Mr. White. He is even more determined in his admiration of old *ruins* than I am. You see I am glad to pick a hole in his jacket, being more jealous of his personal favor in Miss Seward's eyes, than of his poetical reputation.

"I quite agree with you about the plan of young Betty's education, and am no great idolater of the learned languages, excepting for what they contain. We spend in youth that time in admiring the wards of the key, which we should employ in opening the cabinet and examining its treasures. A prudent and accomplished friend, who would make instruction acceptable to him for the sake of the amusement which it conveys, would be worth an hundred schools. How can so wonderfully premature a genius, accustomed to excite interest in thousands, be made a member of a class with other boys!"

To return to Scott's own "graver cares" while Marmion was in progress—among them were those of preparing himself for an office to which he was formally appointed soon afterwards, namely, that of Secretary to a Parliamentary Commission for the improvement of Scottish Jurisprudence. This commission, at the head of which was Sir Islay Campbell, Lord President of the Court of Session, continued in operation for two or three years. Scott's salary, as Secretary, was a mere trifle; but he had been led to expect that his exertions in this capacity would lead to better things. In giving a general view of his affairs to his brother-in-law in India, he says:—

"The Clerk of Session, who retired to make way for me, retains the appointments, while I do the duty. This was rather a hard bargain, but it was made when the Administration was going to pieces, and I was glad to swim ashore on a plank of the wreck; or, in a word, to be provided for any how, before the new people came in. To be sure, nobody could have foreseen that in a year's time my friends were all to be in again. . . . . I am principally pleased with my new appointment as being conferred on me by our chief law lords and King's counsel, and consequently an honorable professional distinction. The employment will be but temporary, but may have consequences important to my future lot in life, if I give due satisfaction in the discharge of it."

He appears accordingly to have submitted to a great deal of miserable drudgery in mastering beforehand the details of the technical controversies which had called for legislatorial interference; and he discharged his functions, as usual, with the warm approbation of his superiors; but no result followed. This is alluded to, among other things, in his correspondence with Mr. Southey, during the print-

ing of Marmion. I shall now go back to extract some of these letters; they will not only enable the reader to fill up the outline of the preceding narrative, as regards Scott's own various occupations at this period, but illustrate very strikingly the readiness with which, however occupied, he would turn aside whenever he saw any opportunity of forwarding the pursuits and interests of other literary men.

Mr. Southey had written to Scott, on the 27th September, 1807, informing him that he had desired his booksellers to forward a copy of "Palmerin of England," then on the eve of publication—announcing also his "Chronicle of the Cid;" and adding, "I rejoice to hear that we are to have another Lay, and hope we may have as many Last Lays of the Minstrel, as our ancestors had Last Words of Mr. Baxter." Scott's answer was this:—

"*To Robert Southey, Esq.*

"Ashestiel, 1st October, 1807.

"My dear Southey,

"It will give me the most sincere pleasure to receive any token of your friendly remembrance, more especially in the shape of a romance of knight-errantry. You know so well how to furbish the arms of a preux chevalier, without converting him *à la Tressan* into a modern light dragoon, that my expectations from Palmerin are very high, and I have given directions to have him sent to this retreat so soon as he reaches Edinburgh. The half-guinea for Hogg's poems was duly received. The uncertainty of your residence prevented the book being sent at the time proposed—it shall be forwarded from Edinburgh to the bookseller at Carlisle, who will probably know how to send it safe. I hope very soon to send you my Life of Dryden, and eke my *last* Lay—(by the way, the former ditty was only proposed as the lay of the *last* Minstrel, not his *last* fitt.) I grieve that you have renounced the harp; but still I confide, that, having often touched it so much to the delight of the hearers, you will return to it again after a short interval. As I don't much admire compliments, you may believe me sincere when I tell you, that I have read Madoc three times since my first cursory perusal, and each time with increased admiration of the poetry. But a poem whose merits are of that higher tone does not immediately take with the public at large. It is even possible that during your own life—and may it be as long as every real lover of literature can wish—you must be contented with the applause of the few whom nature has gifted with the rare taste for discriminating in poetry. But the mere *readers of verse* must one day

come in, and then Madoc will assume his real place at the feet of Milton. Now this opinion of mine was not that (to speak frankly) which I formed on reading the poem at first, though I then felt much of its merit. I hope you have not and don't mean to part with the copy-right. I do not think Wordsworth and you understand the bookselling animal well enough, and wish you would one day try my friend Constable, who would give any terms for a connection with you. I am most anxious to see the Cid. Do you know I committed a theft upon you, (neither of the gait, kine, nor horse, nor outside nor inside plenishing, such as my forefathers sought in Cumberland,) but of many verses of the Queen Auragua,* or howsoever you spell her name? I repeated them to a very great lady, (the Princess of Wales,) who was so much delighted with them, that I think she got them by heart also. She asked a copy, but that I declined to give, under pretence I could not give an accurate one; but I promised to prefer her request to you. If you wish to oblige her R. H., I will get the verses transmitted to her; if not, the thing may be passed over.

"Many thanks for your invitation to Keswick, which I hope to accept, time and season permitting. Is your brother with you? If so, remember me kindly. Where is Wordsworth, and what doth he do? I wrote him a few lines some weeks ago, which I suspect never came to hand. I suppose you are possessed of all relating to the Cid, otherwise I would mention an old romance, chiefly relating to his banishment, which is in John Frere's possession, and from which he made some lively translations in a tripping Alexandrine stanza. I dare say he would communicate the original, if it could be of the least use.† I am an humble petitioner that your interesting Spanish ballads be in some shape appended to the Cid. Be assured they will give him wings. There is a long letter written with a pen like a stick. I beg my respects to Mrs. Southey, in which Mrs. Scott joins; and I am, very truly and affectionately, yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

To the Same.

"Edinburgh, November, 1807.

"My dear Southey,

"I received your letter some time, but had then no opportunity to see Constable, as I was residing at some distance from Edinburgh. Since I came to town, I spoke to Constable, whom I find anxious to be connected with you. It occurs to me that the only difference between him and our fathers in the Row is on the

* The ballad of Queen Orraca was first published in the Edinburgh Annual for 1808.

† Mr. Southey introduced, in the appendix to his Chronicle of the Cid, some specimens of Mr. Frere's admirable translation of the ancient *Poema del Cid*, to which Scott here alludes.

principle contained in the old proverb :—*He that would thrive—must rise by five ;—He that has thriven—may lie till seven.* Constable *would* thrive, and therefore bestows more pains than our fathers who *have* thriven. I do not speak this without book, because I know he has pushed off several books which had got aground in the Row. But, to say the truth, I have always found advantage in keeping on good terms with several of the trade, but never suffering any one of them to consider me as a monopoly. They are very like farmers, who thrive best at a high rent; and, in general, take most pains to sell a book that has cost them money to purchase. The bad sale of Thalaba is truly astonishing; it should have sold off in a twelvemonth at farthest.

"As you occasionally review, will you forgive my suggesting a circumstance for your consideration, to which you will give exactly the degree of weight you please. I am perfectly certain that Jeffrey would think himself both happy and honored in receiving any communication which you might send him, choosing your books and expressing your own opinions. The terms of the Edinburgh Review are ten guineas a-sheet, and will shortly be advanced considerably. I question if the same unpleasant sort of work is any where else so well compensated. The only reason which occurs to me as likely to prevent your affording the Edinburgh some critical assistance, is the severity of the criticisms upon Madoc and Thalaba. I do not know if this will be at all removed by assuring you, as I can do upon my honor, that Jeffrey has, notwithstanding the flippancy of these articles, the most sincere respect both for your person and talents. The other day I designedly led the conversation on that subject, and had the same reason I always have had to consider his attack as arising from a radical difference in point of taste, or rather feeling of poetry, but by no means from any thing approaching either to enmity or a false conception of your talents. I do not think that a difference of this sort should prevent you, if you are otherwise disposed to do so, from carrying a proportion at least of your critical labors to a much better market than the Annual.* Pray think of this, and if you are disposed to give your assistance, I am positively certain that I can transact the matter with the utmost delicacy towards both my friends. I am certain you may add £100 a-year, or double the sum, to your income in this way with almost no trouble, and, as times go, that is no trifle.

"I have to thank you for Palmerin, which has been my afternoon reading for some days. I like it very much, although it is, I think, considerably inferior to the Amadis. But I wait with double anxiety for the Cid, in which I expect to find very much information as well as amusement. One discovery I have made is, that

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* The Annual Review, conducted by Dr. Arthur Aiken, commenced in 1802, and was discontinued in 1808.

we understand little or nothing of Don Quixote except by the Spanish romances. The English and French romances throw very little light on the subject of the doughty cavalier of La Mancha. I am thinking of publishing a small edition of the Morte Arthur, merely to preserve that ancient record of English chivalry; but my copy is so late as 1637, so I must look out for earlier editions to collate. That of Caxton is, I believe, *introuvable*. Will you give me your opinion on this project? I have written to Mr. Frere about the Spanish books, but I do not very well know if my letter has reached him. I expect to bring Constable to a point respecting the poem of Hindoo Mythology.* I should esteem myself very fortunate in being assisting in bringing forth a twin brother of Thalaba. Wordsworth is harshly treated in the Edinburgh Review, but Jeffrey gives the sonnets as much praise as he usually does to any body. I made him admire the song of Lord Clifford's minstrel, which I like exceedingly myself. But many of Wordsworth's lesser poems are *caviare*, not only to the multitude, but to all who judge of poetry by the established rules of criticism. Some of them, I can safely say, I like the better for these aberrations; in others they get beyond me—at any rate, they ought to have been more cautiously hazarded. I hope soon to send you a Life of Dryden and a lay of former times. The latter I would willingly have bestowed more time upon; but what can I do?—my supposed poetical turn ruined me in my profession, and the least it can do is to give me some occasional assistance instead of it. Mrs. Scott begs kind compliments to Mrs. Southey, and I am always kindly yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

Mr. Southey, in reply to this letter, stated at length certain considerations, political, moral, and critical, which rendered it impossible for him to enlist himself on any terms in the corps of the Edinburgh Reviewers. In speaking of his friend Wordsworth's last work, which had been rather severely handled in this Review, he expresses his regret that the poet, in his magnificent sonnet on Killiecrankie, should have introduced the Viscount of Dundee without apparent censure of his character; and passing to Scott's own affairs, he says, "Marmion is expected as impatiently by me as he is by ten thousand others. Believe me, Scott, no man of real genius was ever a puritanical stickler for correctness, or fastidious about any faults except his

* The Curse of Kehama was published by Longman & Co. in 1810.

own. The best artists, both in poetry and painting, have produced the most. Give us more lays, and correct them at leisure for after editions—not laboriously, but when the amendment comes naturally and unsought for. It never does to sit down doggedly to correct." The rest, Scott's answer will sufficiently explain.

"*To Robert Southey, Esq.*

"Edinburgh, 15th December, 1807.

"Dear Southey,

"I yesterday received your letter, and can perfectly enter into your ideas on the subject of the Review:—indeed I dislike most extremely the late stream of politics which they have adopted, as it seems, even on their own showing, to be cruelly imprudent. Who ever thought he did a service to a person engaged in an arduous conflict, by proving to him, or attempting to prove to him, that he must necessarily be beaten; and what effect can such language have but to accelerate the accomplishment of the prophecy which it contains? And as for Catholic Emancipation,—I am not, God knows, a bigot in religious matters, nor a friend to persecution; but if a particular sect of religionists are, *ipso facto*, connected with foreign politics—and placed under the spiritual direction of a class of priests, whose unrivalled dexterity and activity are increased by the rules which detach them from the rest of the world—I humbly think that we may be excused from intrusting to them those places in the state where the influence of such a clergy, who act under the direction of a passive tool of our worst foe, is likely to be attended with the most fatal consequences. If a gentleman chooses to walk about with a couple of pounds of gunpowder in his pocket, if I give him the shelter of my roof, I may at least be permitted to exclude him from the seat next to the fire. So thinking, I have felt your scruples in doing any thing for the Review of late.

"As for my good friend Dundee, I cannot admit his culpability in the extent you allege; and it is scandalous in the Sunday bard to join in your condemnation, 'and yet come of a noble Græme! I admit he was *tant soit peu* savage, but he was a noble savage; and the beastly Covenanters against whom he acted, hardly had any claim to be called men, unless what was founded on their walking upon their hind feet. You can hardly conceive the perfidy, cruelty, and stupidity of these people according to the accounts they have themselves preserved. But I admit I had many cavalier prejudices instilled into me, as my ancestor was a Killiecrankie man.

"I am very glad the Morte Arthur is in your hands; it has been long a favorite of mine, and I intended to have made it a handsome book, in the shape of a small antique-looking quarto,

with wooden vignettes of costume. I wish you would not degrade him into a squat 12mo; but admit the temptation you will probably feel to put it into the same shape with Palmerin and Amadis. If, on this or any occasion, you can cast a job in the way of my friend Ballantyne, I should consider it as a particular personal favor, and the convenience would be pretty near the same to you, as your proofs must come by post at any rate. If I can assist you about this matter, command my services. The late Duke of Roxburghe once showed me some curious remarks of his own upon the genealogy of the Knights of the Round Table. He was a curious and unwearied reader of romance, and made many observations in writing; whether they are now accessible or no, I am doubtful. Do you follow the metrical or the printed books in your account of the Round Table, and would your task be at all facilitated by the use of a copy of Sir Launcelot, from the press of Jehan Davis, which I have by me?

"As to literary envy, I agree with you, dear Southey, in believing it was never felt by men who had any powers of their own to employ to better purpose than in crossing or jostling their companions; and I can say, with a safe conscience, that I am most delighted with praise from those who convince me of their good taste by admiring the genius of my contemporaries. Believe me ever, dear Southey, with best compliments to Mrs. S., yours affectionately,

WALTER SCOTT."

The following letter to another accomplished and attached friend, will bring us back to the completion of Marmion.

"*To the Right Hon. the Lady Louisa Stuart, London.*

"Edinburgh, 19th January, 1808.

"I am much flattered, dear Lady Louisa, by your kind and encouraging remembrance. Marmion is, at this instant, gasping upon Flodden Field, and there I have been obliged to leave him for these few days in the death pangs. I hope I shall find time enough this morning to knock him on the head with two or three thumping stanzas. I thought I should have seen Lady Douglas while she was at Dalkeith, but all the Clerks of Session (excepting myself, who have at present no salary) are subject to the gout, and one of them was unluckily visited with a fit on the day I should have been at the Duke's, so I had his duty and my own to discharge. Pray, Lady Louisa, don't look for Marmion in Hawthornden or any where else, excepting in the too thick quarto which bears his name. As to the fair * * * * * * *, I beg her pardon with all my heart and spirit; but I rather think that the habit of

writing novels or romances, whether in prose or verse, is unfavorable to rapid credulity; at least these sort of folks know that they can easily make fine stories themselves, and will be therefore as curious in examining those of other folks as a cunning vintner in detecting the sophistication of his neighbor's claret by the help of his own experience. Talking of fair ladies and fables reminds me of Mr. Sharpe's ballads,* which I suppose Lady Douglas carried with her to Bothwell. They exhibit, I think, a very considerable portion of imagination, and occasionally, though not uniformly, great flow of versification. There is one verse, or rather the whole description of a musical ghost lady sitting among the ruins of her father's tower, that pleased me very much. But his language is too flowery, and even tawdry, and I quarrelled with a lady in the first poem who yielded up her affection upon her lover showing his white teeth. White teeth ought to be taken great care of and set great store by; but I cannot allow them to be an object of passionate admiration—it is too like subduing a lady's heart by grinning. Grieved am I for Lady Douglas's indisposition, which I hope will be short, and I am sure will be tolerable with such stores of amusement around her. Last night, I saw all the Dalkeith family presiding in that happy scene of mixed company and Babylonian confusion, the Queen's Assembly. I also saw Mr. Allison there. I hope your ladyship has not renounced your intention of coming to Edinburgh for a day or two, and that I shall have the honor to see you. We have a very diverting lion and sundry wild beasts; but the most meritorious is Miss Lydia White, who is what Oxonians call a lioness of the first order, with stockings nineteen times nine dyed blue, very lively, very good humored, and extremely absurd. It is very diverting to see sober Scotch ladies staring at this phenomenon. I am, with great respect, your ladyship's honored and obliged

WALTER SCOTT."

Marmion was published on the 23d of February. The letter which accompanied the presentation copy to Sunninghill, had been preceded a few weeks before by one containing an abstract of some of Weber's German researches, which were turned to account in the third edition of Sir Tristrem; but Mr. Ellis was at this time in a very feeble state of health, and that communication had elicited no reply.

* A small volume, entitled "Metrical Legends and other Poems," was published in 1807 by Scott's friend, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq.

"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"Edinburgh, February 23, 1808.

Sleepest thou, wakest thou, George Ellis?'

"Be it known that this letter is little better than a *fehde brief*,—as to the meaning of which, is it not written in Wachter's Thesaurus and the Lexicon of Adelung? To expound more vernacularly, I wrote you, I know not how long ago, a swinging epistle of and concerning German Romances, with some discoveries not of my own discovering, and other matter not furiously to the present purpose. And this I caused to be conveyed to you by *ane gentil knizt, Sir William Forbes, knizt*, who assures me he left it as directed, at Sir Peter Parker's. 'Since,' to vary my style to that of the leger, 'none of yours.' To avenge myself of this unusual silence, which is a manifest usurpation of my privileges, (being the worst correspondent in the world, Heber excepted,) I have indited to you an epistle in verse, and that I may be sure of its reaching your hands, I have caused to be thrown off 2000 copies thereof, that you may not plead ignorance.

"This is oracular, but will be explained by perusing the Introduction to the 5th canto of a certain dumpy quarto, entitled Marmion, a Tale of Flodden Field, of which I have to beg your acceptance of a copy. 'So wonder on till time makes all things plain.' One thing I am sure you will admit, and that is, that—'the hobby-horse is not forgot;' nay, you will see I have paraded in my introductions a plurality of hobby-horses—a whole stud, on each of which I have, in my day, been accustomed to take an airing. This circumstance will also gratify our friend Douce, whose lucubrations have been my study for some days.* They will, I fear, be *caviare* to the multitude, and even to the *soi-disant* connoisseurs, who have never found by experience what length of time, of reading, and of reflection, is necessary to collect the archæological knowledge of which he has displayed such profusion. The style would also, in our Scotch phrase, *thole a mends*, i. e. admit of improvement. But his extensive and curious researches place him at the head of the class of black-letter antiquaries; and his knowledge is communicated without the manifest irritation—which his contemporaries have too often displayed in matters of controversy,—without ostentation, and without self-sufficiency. I hope the success of his work will encourage this modest and learned antiquary to give us more collectanea. There are few things I read with more pleasure. Charlotte joins in kindest respects to Mrs. Ellis. I have some hopes of being in town this spring, but I fear you will be at Bath. When you have run over Marmion, I hope you will remember how impatient I shall

* Mr. Douce's Illustrations of Shakspeare were published late in 1807.

be to hear your opinion *sans phrase*. I am sensible I run some risk of being thought to fall below my former level, but those that will play for the gammon must take their chance of this. I am also anxious to have particular news of your health. Ever yours faithfully,

W. S."

The letter reached Ellis before the book; but how well he anticipated the immediate current of criticism, his answer will show.

"Before I have seen the stranger," he says, "and while my judgment is unwarped by her seduction, I think I can venture, from what I remember of the Lay, to anticipate the fluctuations of public opinion concerning her. The first decision respecting the Last Minstrel was, that he was evidently the production of a strong and vivid mind, and not quite unworthy the author of Glenfinlas and the Eve of St. John; but that it was difficult to eke out so long a poem with uniform spirit; that success generally emboldens writers to become more careless in a second production; that——in short, months elapsed, before one tenth of our wise critics had discovered that a long poem which no one reader could bring himself to lay down till he had arrived at the last line, was a composition destined perhaps to suggest new rules of criticism, but certainly not amenable to the tribunal of a taste formed on the previous examination of models of a perfectly different nature. That Minstrel is now in its turn become a standard; Marmion will therefore be compared with this *metre*, and will most probably be in the first instance pronounced too long, or too short, or improperly divided, or &c. &c. &c., till the sage and candid critics are compelled, a second time, by the united voice of all who can read at all, to confess that '*aut prodesse aut delectare*' is the only real standard of poetical merit. One of my reasons for liking your Minstrel was, that the subject was purely and necessarily *poetical;* whereas my sincere and sober opinion of all the *epic poems* I have ever read, the Odyssey perhaps excepted, is, that they ought to have been written in prose; and hence, though I think with Mackintosh, that '*forte epos acer ut nemo Varius scribit*,' I rejoice in your choice of a subject which cannot be considered as epic, or conjure up in the memory a number of fantastic rules, which, like Harpies, would spoil the banquet offered to the imagination. A few days, however, will, I hope, enable me to write *avec connaissance de cause*."

I have, I believe, alluded, in a former chapter of this narrative, to a remark which occurs in Mr. Southey's Life of Cowper, namely, that a man's character may be judged

of even more surely by the letters which his friends addressed to him, than by those which he himself penned; and I cannot but think that—freely as Scott's own feelings and opinions were poured from his head and heart to all whom he considered as worthy of a wise and good man's confidence—the openness and candor with which the best and most sagacious of his friends wrote to him about his own literary productions, will be considered hereafter (when all the glories of this age shall, like him, have passed away) as affording a striking confirmation of the truth of the biographer's observation. It was thus, for example, that Mr. Southey himself, who happened to be in London when Marmion came out, expressed himself to the author, on his return to Keswick:—

"Half the poem I had read at Heber's before my own copy arrived. I went punctually to breakfast with him, and he was long enough dressing to let me devour so much of it. The story is made of better materials than the Lay, yet they are not so well fitted together. As a whole, it has not pleased me so much—in parts it has pleased me more. There is nothing so finely conceived in your former poem as the death of Marmion: there is nothing finer in its conception any where. The introductory epistles I did not wish away, because, as poems, they gave me great pleasure; but I wished them at the end of the volume, or at the beginning—any where except where they were. My taste is perhaps peculiar in disliking all interruptions in narrative poetry. When the poet lets his story sleep, and talks in his own person, it has to me the same sort of unpleasant effect that is produced at the end of an act. You are alive to know what follows, and lo—down comes the curtain, and the fiddlers begin with their abominations. The general opinion, however, is with me, in this particular instance, ..."

I have no right to quote the rest of Mr. Southey's letter, which is filled chiefly with business of his own; but towards its close, immediately after mentioning a princely instance of generosity on the part of his friend Mr. Walter Savage Landor to a brother poet, he has a noble sentence, which I hope to be pardoned for extracting, as equally applicable to his own character and that of the man he was addressing—"Great poets," says the author of Thalaba, "have no envy; little ones are full of it! I doubt whether any man

ever criticised a good poem maliciously, who had not written a bad one himself." I must not omit to mention, that on his way from London down to Keswick, Mr. Southey had visited at Stamford the late industrious antiquary, Octavius Gilchrist, who was also at this time one of Scott's frequent correspondents. Mr. Gilchrist writes (May 21) to Scott, "Southey pointed out to me a passage in Marmion which he thought finer than any thing he remembered."

Mr. Wordsworth knew Scott too well not to use the same masculine freedom.

"Thank you," he says, "for Marmion. I think your end has been attained. That it is not the end which I should wish you to propose to yourself, you will be well aware, from what you know of my notions of composition, both as to matter and manner. In the circle of my acquaintance, it seems as well liked as the Lay, though I have heard that in the world it is not so. Had the poem been much better than the Lay, it could scarcely have satisfied the public, which has too much of the monster, the moral monster, in its composition. The spring has burst out upon us all at once, and the vale is now in exquisite beauty; a gentle shower has fallen this morning, and I hear the thrush, who has built in my orchard, singing amain! How happy we should be to see you here again! Ever, my dear Scott, your sincere friend,

W. W."

I pass over a multitude of the congratulatory effusions of inferior names, but must not withhold part of a letter on a folio sheet, written not in the first hurry of excitement, but on the second of May, two months after Marmion had reached Sunninghill.

"I have," says Ellis, "been endeavoring to divest myself of those prejudices to which the impression on my own palate would naturally give rise, and to discover the sentiments of those who have only tasted the general compound, after seeing the sweetmeats picked out by my comrades and myself. I have severely questioned all my friends whose critical discernment I could fairly trust, and mean to give you the honest result of their collective opinions; for which reason, inasmuch as I shall have a good deal to say, besides which there seems to be a natural connection between foolscap and criticism, I have ventured on this expanse of paper. In the first place, then, all the world are agreed that you are like the elephant mentioned in the Spectator, who was the greatest elephant in the world except himself, and consequently, that the only question at issue is, whether the Lay or Marmion

shall be reputed the most pleasing poem in our language—save and except one or two of Dryden's fables. But, with respect to the two rivals, I think the Lay is, on the whole, the greatest favorite. It is admitted that the fable of Marmion is greatly superior—that it contains a greater diversity of character—that it inspires more interest—and that it is by no means inferior in point of poetical expression; but it is contended that the incident of Deloraine's journey to Melrose surpasses any thing in Marmion, and that the personal appearance of the Minstrel, who, though the last, is by far the most charming of all minstrels, is by no means compensated by the idea of an author shorn of his picturesque beard, deprived of his harp, and writing letters to his intimate friends. These introductory epistles, indeed, though excellent in themselves, are in fact only interruptions to the fable; and, accordingly, nine out of ten have perused them separately, either after or before the poem—and it is obvious that they cannot have produced, in either case, the effect which was proposed—viz. of relieving the reader's attention, and giving variety to the whole. Perhaps, continue these critics, it would be fair to say that Marmion delights us in spite of its introductory epistles—while the Lay owes its principal charm to the venerable old minstrel:—the two poems may be considered as equally respectable to the talents of the author; but the first, being a more perfect whole, will be more constantly preferred. Now, all this may be very true—but it is no less true that every body has already read Marmion *more than once*—that it is the subject of general conversation—that it delights all ages and all tastes, and that it is universally allowed to improve upon a second reading. My own opinion is, that both the productions are equally good in their different ways: yet, upon the whole, I had rather be the author of Marmion than of the Lay, because I think its species of excellence of much more difficult attainment. What degree of bulk may be essentially necessary to the corporeal part of an Epic poem, I know not; but sure I am that the story of Marmion might have furnished twelve books as easily as six—that the masterly character of Constance would not have been less bewitching had it been much more minutely painted—and that De Wilton might have been dilated with great ease, and even to considerable advantage;—in short, that, had it been your intention merely to exhibit a spirited, romantic story, instead of making that story subservient to the delineation of the manners which prevailed at a certain period of our history, the number and variety of your characters would have suited any scale of painting. Marmion is to Deloraine what Tom Jones is to Joseph Andrews—the varnish of high breeding no where diminishes the prominence of the features—and the minion of a king is as light and sinewy a cavalier as the Borderer,—rather less ferocious, more wicked, less fit for the hero of a ballad, and far more for the hero of a regular poem. On the whole, I can sincerely

assure you, '*sans phrase*,' that, had I seen Marmion without knowing the author, I should have ranked it with Theodore and Honoria,—that is to say, on the very top shelf of English poetry. Now for faults." .....

Mr. Ellis proceeds to notice some minor blemishes, which he hoped to see erased in a future copy; but as most, if not all of these were sufficiently dwelt on by the professional critics, whose strictures are affixed to the poem in the last collective edition, and as, moreover, Scott did not avail himself of any of the hints thus publicly, as well as privately, tendered for his guidance, I shall not swell my page by transcribing more of this elegant letter. The part I have given may, no doubt, be considered as an epitome of the very highest and most refined of London table-talk on the subject of Marmion, during the first freshness of its popularity, and before the Edinburgh Review, the only critical journal of which any one in those days thought very seriously, had pronounced its verdict.

When we consider some parts of that judgment, together with the author's personal intimacy with the editor, and the aid which he had of late been affording to the journal itself, it must be allowed that Mr. Jeffrey acquitted himself on this occasion in a manner highly creditable to his courageous sense of duty; and that he relied on being considered as doing so by the poet himself, illustrates equally his sagacity, and the manly candor and strength of mind, for which Scott had all along been esteemed and honored, the most by those who knew him the best. The Number of the Edinburgh Review containing the article on Marmion, was accompanied by this note:—

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Castle Street.*

"Queen Street, Tuesday.

"Dear Scott,

"If I did not give you credit for more magnanimity than any other of your irritable tribe, I should scarcely venture to put this into your hands. As it is, I do it with no little solicitude and earnestly hope that it will make no difference in the friendship which has hitherto subsisted between us. I have spoken of your poem exactly as I think; and, though I cannot reasonably suppose that you will be pleased with every thing I have said, it would

mortify me very severely to believe I had given you pain. If you have any amity left for me, you will not delay very long to tell me so. In the mean time, I am very sincerely yours,

F. JEFFREY."

The reader who has the Edinburgh Review for April, 1808, will, I hope, pause here, and read the article as it stands; endeavoring to put himself into the situation of Scott when it was laid upon his desk, together with this ominous billet from the critic, who, as it happened, had been for some time engaged to dine that same Tuesday at his table in Castle Street. I have not room to transcribe the whole; but no unfair notion of its spirit and tenor may be gathered from one or two of the principal paragraphs. After an ingenious little dissertation on epic poetry in general, the reviewer says—

"We are inclined to suspect that the success of the work now before us will be less brilliant than that of the author's former publication, though we are ourselves of opinion that its intrinsic merits are nearly, if not altogether equal; and that, if it had had the fate to be the elder born, it would have inherited as fair a portion of renown as has fallen to the lot of its predecessor. It is a good deal longer, indeed, and somewhat more ambitious; and it is rather clearer, that it has greater faults than that it has greater beauties—though, for our own parts, we are inclined to believe in both propositions. It has more flat and tedious passages, and more ostentation of historical and antiquarian lore; but it has also greater richness and variety, both of character and incident; and, if it has less sweetness and pathos in the softer passages, it has certainly more vehemence and force of coloring in the loftier and busier representations of action and emotion. The place of the prologuizing minstrel is but ill supplied, indeed, by the epistolary dissertations which are prefixed to each book of the present poem; and the ballad-pieces and mere episodes which it contains have less finish and poetical beauty; but there is more airiness and spirit in the higher delineations; and the story, if not more skilfully conducted, is at least better complicated, and extended through a wider field of adventure. The characteristics of both, however, are evidently the same—a broken narrative—a redundancy of minute description—bursts of unequal and energetic poetry—and a general tone of spirit and animation, unchecked by timidity or affectation, and unchastened by any great delicacy of taste or elegance of fancy.'

* * * * * * *

"But though we think this last romance of Mr. Scott's about as good as the former, and allow that it affords great indications of poetical talent, we must remind our readers that we never entertained much partiality for this sort of composition, and ventured on a former occasion to express our regret that an author endowed with such talents should consume them in imitations of obsolete extravagance, and in the representation of manners and sentiments in which none of his readers can be supposed to take much interest, except the few who can judge of their exactness. To write a modern romance of chivalry, seems to be much such a phantasy as to build a modern abbey or an English pagoda. For once, however, it may be excused as a pretty caprice of genius; but a second production of the same sort is entitled to less indulgence, and imposes a sort of duty to drive the author from so idle a task, by a fair exposition of the faults which are, in a manner, inseparable from its execution. His genius, seconded by the omnipotence of fashion, has brought chivalry again into temporary favor. Fine ladies and gentlemen now talk, indeed, of donjons, keeps, tabards, scutcheons, tressures, caps of maintenance, portcullises, wimples, and we know not what besides; just as they did in the days of Dr. Darwin's popularity of gnomes, sylphs, oxygen, gossamer, polygynia, and polyandria. That fashion, however, passed rapidly away, and Mr. Scott should take care that a different sort of pedantry does not produce the same effects."

The detailed exposition of faults follows; and it is, I am sure, done in a style on which the critic cannot now reflect with perfect equanimity, any more than on the lofty and decisive tone of the sweeping paragraphs by which it was introduced. All this, however, I can suppose Scott to have gone through with great composure; but he must, I think, have wondered, to say the least, when he found himself accused of having "throughout neglected Scottish feelings and Scottish characters!"—He who had just poured out all the patriotic enthusiasm of his soul in so many passages of Marmion which every Scotchman to the end of time will have by heart, painted the capital, the court, the camp, the heroic old chieftains of Scotland in colors instinct with a fervor that can never die; and dignified the most fatal of her national misfortunes by a celebration as loftily pathetic as ever blended pride with sorrow,—a battle-piece which even his critic had pronounced to be the noblest save in Homer! But not even this injustice was likely to wound him very deeply. Coming from one of the recent wit-

nesses of his passionate agitation on *the Mound*, perhaps he would only smile at it.

At all events, Scott could make allowance for the petulancies into which men the least disposed to injure the feelings of others will sometimes be betrayed, when the critical rod is in their hands. He assured Mr. Jeffrey that the article had not disturbed his digestion, though he hoped neither his booksellers nor the public would agree with the opinions it expressed; and begged he would come to dinner at the hour previously appointed. Mr. Jeffrey appeared accordingly, and was received by his host with the frankest cordiality; but had the mortification to observe that the mistress of the house, though perfectly polite, was not quite so easy with him as usual. She, too, behaved herself with exemplary civility during the dinner; but could not help saying, in her broken English, when her guest was departing, "Well, good night, Mr. Jeffrey—dey tell me you have abused Scott in de Review, and I hope Mr. Constable has paid *you* very well for writing it." This anecdote was not perhaps worth giving; but it has been printed already in an exaggerated shape, so I thought it as well to present the edition which I have derived from the lips of all the three persons concerned. No one, I am sure, will think the worse of any of them for it,—least of all of Mrs. Scott. She might well be pardoned, if she took to herself more than her own share in the misadventures of the most affectionate of protectors. It was, I believe, about this time, when, as Scott has confessed, "the popularity of Marmion gave him such a *heeze* he had for a moment almost lost his footing," that a shrewd and sly observer, Mrs. Grant of Laggan, said, wittily enough, upon leaving a brilliant assembly where the poet had been surrounded by all the buzz and glare of fashionable ecstasy, —"Mr. Scott always seems to me like a glass, through which the rays of admiration pass without sensibly affecting it; but the bit of paper that lies beside it will presently be in a blaze—and no wonder."

I shall not, after so much of and about criticism, say any thing more of Marmion in this place, than that I have

always considered it as, on the whole, the greatest of Scott's poems. There is a certain light, easy, virgin charm about the Lay, which we look for in vain through the subsequent volumes of his verse; but the superior strength, and breadth, and boldness, both of conception and execution, in the Marmion, appear to me indisputable. The great blot, the combination of *mean felony* with so many noble qualities in the character of the hero, was, as the poet says, severely commented on at the time by the most ardent of his early friends, Leyden; but though he admitted the justice of that criticism, he chose "to let the tree lie as it had fallen." He was also sensible that many of the subordinate and connecting parts of the narrative are flat, harsh, and obscure—but would never make any serious attempt to do away with those imperfections; and perhaps they, after all, heighten by contrast the effect of the passages of high-wrought enthusiasm which alone he considered, in after days, with satisfaction. As for the "epistolary dissertations," it must, I take it, be allowed that they interfered with the flow of the story, when readers were turning the leaves with the first ardor of curiosity; and they were not, in fact, originally intended to be interwoven in any fashion with the romance of Marmion. Though the author himself does not allude to, and had perhaps forgotten the circumstance, when writing the Introductory Essay of 1830—they were announced, by an advertisement, early in 1807, as "Six Epistles from Ettrick Forest," to be published in a separate volume, similar to that of the Ballads and Lyrical Pieces; and perhaps it might have been better that this first plan had been adhered to. But however that may be, are there any pages, among all he ever wrote, that one would be more sorry he should not have written? They are among the most delicious portraitures that genius ever painted of itself,—buoyant, virtuous, happy genius—exulting in its own energies, yet possessed and mastered by a clear, calm, modest mind, and happy only in diffusing happiness around it.

With what gratification those Epistles were read by the friends to whom they were addressed, it would be super-

fluous to show. He had, in fact, painted them almost as fully as himself; and who might not have been proud to find a place in such a gallery? The tastes and habits of six of those men, in whose intercourse Scott found the greatest pleasure when his fame was approaching its meridian splendor, are thus preserved for posterity; and when I reflect with what avidity we catch at the least hint which seems to afford us a glimpse of the intimate circle of any great poet of former ages, I cannot but believe that posterity would have held this record precious, even had the individuals been in themselves far less remarkable than a Rose, an Ellis, a Heber, a Skene, a Marriott, and an Erskine.

Many other friends, however, have found a part in these affectionate sketches; and I doubt whether any manifestation of public applause afforded the poet so much pleasure as the letter in which one of these, alluded to in the fourth Epistle as then absent from Scotland by reason of his feeble health, acknowledged the emotions that had been stirred in him when he came upon that unexpected page. This was Colin Mackenzie of Portmore, the same who beat him in a competition of rhymes at the High School, and whose ballad of *Ellandonnan Castle* had been introduced into the third volume of the Minstrelsy. This accomplished and singularly modest man, now no more, received Marmion at Lympstone.

"My dear Walter," he says, "amidst the greetings that will crowd on you, I know that those of a hearty, sincere, admiring old friend will not be coldly taken. I am not going to attempt an enumeration of beauties, but I must thank you for the elegant and delicate allusion in which you express your friendship for myself —Forbes—and, above all, that sweet memorial of his late excellent father.* I find I have got the *mal du pays*, and must return to enjoy the sight and society of a few chosen friends. You are not unaware of the place you hold on my list, and your description of our *committees*† has inspired me with tenfold ardor to renew a

* Mr. Mackenzie had married a daughter of Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, Bart., the biographer of Beattie.

† The supper meetings of the Cavalry Club.—See *Marmion*, Introduction to Canto IV.

pleasure so highly enjoyed, and remembered with such enthusiasm. Adieu, my dear friend. Ever yours,

C. M."

His next-door neighbor at Ashestiel, Mr. Pringle of Whytbank, "the long-descended laird of Yair," writes not less touchingly on the verses in the 2d Epistle, where his beautiful place is mentioned, and the poet introduces

"those sportive boys,
Companions of his mountain joys,"

and paints the rapture with which they had heard him "call Wallace rampart holy ground."

"Your own benevolent heart," says the good laird, "would have enjoyed the scene, could you have witnessed the countenances of my little flock grouped round your book; and perhaps you would have discovered that the father, though the least audible at that moment, was not the most insensible to the honor bestowed upon his children and his parent stream, both alike dear to his heart. May my boys feel an additional motive to act well, that they may cast no discredit upon their early friend!"

But there was one personal allusion, which, almost before his ink was dry, the poet would fain have cancelled. Lord Scott, the young heir of Buccleuch, whose casual absence from "Yarrow's bowers" was regretted in that same epistle (addressed to his tutor, Mr. Marriott)—

"No youthful baron's left to grace
The forest sheriff's lonely chase,
And ape in manly step and tone
The majesty of Oberon."

—this promising boy had left Yarrow to visit it no more. He died a few days after Marmion was published, and Scott, in writing on the event to his uncle, Lord Montagu, (to whom the poem was inscribed,) signified a fear that these verses might now serve but to quicken the sorrows of the mother. Lord Montagu answers—

"I have been able to ascertain Lady Dalkeith's feelings in a manner that will, I think, be satisfactory to you, particularly as it came from herself, without my giving her the pain of being asked. In a letter I received yesterday, giving directions about some

books, she writes as follows :—'And pray send me Marmion too—this may seem odd to you, but at some moments I am soothed by things which at other times drive me almost mad.'"

On the 7th of April, Scott says to Lady Louisa Stewart—

"The death of poor dear Lord Scott was such a stunning blow to me, that I really felt for some time totally indifferent to the labors of literary correction. I had very great hopes from that boy, who was of an age to form, on the principles of his father and grandfather, his feelings towards the numerous families who depend on them. But God's will be done. I intended to have omitted the lines referring to him in Marmion in the second edition; for, as to adding any, I could as soon write the Iliad. But I am now glad I altered my intention, as Lady Dalkeith has sent for the book, and dwells with melancholy pleasure on whatever recalls the memory of the poor boy. She has borne her distress like an angel, as she is, and always has been; but God only can cure the wounds he inflicts."

One word more as to these personal allusions. While he was correcting a second proof of the passage where Pitt and Fox are mentioned together, at Stanmore Priory, in April, 1807, Lord Abercorn suggested that the compliment to the Whig statesman ought to be still further heightened, and several lines—

> "For talents mourn untimely lost,
> *When best employed, and wanted most,*" &c.—*

were added accordingly. I have heard, indeed, that they came from the accomplished Marquis's own pen. Ballantyne, however, from some inadvertence, had put the sheet to press before the *revise*, as it is called, arrived in Edinburgh, and some few copies got abroad in which the additional couplets were omitted. A London journal (the Morning Chronicle) was stupid and malignant enough to

* In place of this couplet, and the ten lines which follow it, the original MS. of Marmion has only the following:—

> "If genius high, and judgment sound,
> And wit that loved to play, not wound,
> And all the reasoning powers divine,
> To penetrate, resolve, combine,
> Could save one mortal of the herd
> From error—Fox had never erred."

insinuate that the author had his presentation copies struck off with, or without, them—according as they were for Whig or Tory hands. I mention the circumstance now, only because I see by a letter of Heber's that Scott had thought it worth his while to contradict the absurd charge in the newspapers of the day.

The feelings of political partisanship find no place in this poem; but though the Edinburgh reviewers chose to complain of its "manifest neglect of *Scottish* feelings," I take leave to suspect that the boldness and energy of *British* patriotism which breathes in so many passages, may have had more share than that alleged omission in pointing the pen that criticised Marmion. Scott had sternly and indignantly rebuked and denounced the then too prevalent spirit of anti-national despondence; he had put the trumpet to his lips, and done his part, at least, to sustain the hope and resolution of his countrymen in that struggle from which it was the doctrine of the Edinburgh Review that no sane observer of the times could anticipate any thing but ruin and degradation. He must ever be considered as the "mighty minstrel" of the Antigallican war; and it was Marmion that first announced him in that character.

Be all this as it may, Scott's connection with the Edinburgh Review was now broken off; and indeed it was never renewed, except in one instance, many years after, when the strong wish to serve poor Maturin shook him for a moment from his purpose. The loftiest and purest of human beings seldom act but under a mixture of motives, and I shall not attempt to guess in what proportions he was swayed by aversion to the political doctrines which the journal had lately been avowing with increased openness—by dissatisfaction with its judgments of his own works—or, lastly, by the feeling that, whether those judgments were or were not just, it was but an idle business for him to assist by his own pen the popularity of the vehicle that diffused them. That he was influenced more or less by all of these considerations, appears highly probable; and I fancy I can trace some indications of each of them in a letter with which I am favored by an old friend of mine—

a warm lover of literature, and a sincere admirer both of Scott and Jeffrey, and though numbered among the Tories in the House of Commons, yet one of the most liberal section of his party,—who happened to visit Scotland shortly after the article on Marmion appeared, and has set down his recollections of the course of table-talk at a dinner where he for the first time met Scott in company with the brilliant editor of the Edinburgh Review.

"There were," he says, "only a few people besides the two lions—and assuredly I have seldom passed a more agreeable day. A thousand subjects of literature, antiquities, and manners, were started; and much was I struck, as you may well suppose, by the extent, correctness, discrimination, and accuracy of Jeffrey's information; equally so with his taste, acuteness, and wit, in dissecting every book, author, and story, that came in our way. Nothing could surpass the variety of his knowledge, but the easy rapidity of his manner of producing it. He was then in his meridian. Scott delighted to draw him out, delighted also to talk himself, and displayed, I think, even a larger range of anecdote and illustration; remembering every thing, whether true or false, that was characteristic or impressive; every thing that was good, or lovely, or lively. It struck me that there was this great difference—Jeffrey, for the most part, entertained us, when books were under discussion, with the detection of faults, blunders, absurdities, or plagiarisms: Scott took up the matter where he left it, recalled some compensating beauty or excellence for which no credit had been allowed, and by the recitation, perhaps, of one fine stanza, set the poor victim on his legs again. I believe it was just about this time that Scott had abandoned his place in Mr. Jeffrey's corps. The journal had been started among the clever young society with which Edinburgh abounded when they were both entering life as barristers; and Jeffrey's principal coadjutors for some time were Sydney Smith, Brougham, Horner, Scott himself—and on scientific subjects, Playfair; but clever contributors were sought for in all quarters. Wit and fun were the first desiderata, and, joined with general talent and literature, carried all before them. Neutrality, or something of the kind, as to party politics, seems to have been originally asserted—the plan being, as Scott understood, not to avoid such questions altogether, but to let them be handled by Whig or Tory indifferently, if only the writer could make his article captivating in point of information and good writing. But it was not long before Brougham dipped the concern deep in witty Whiggery; and it was thought at the time that some very foolish neglects on the part of Pitt had a principal share in making several of these brilliant young men decide on carrying over their weapons to the enemy's camp. Scott was a strong Tory; nay, by family

recollections and poetical feelings of association, a Jacobite. Jeffrey, however, was an early friend—and thus there was a confliction of feelings on both sides. Scott, as I was told, remonstrated against the deepening Whiggery—Jeffrey alleged that he could not resist the wit. Scott offered to try his hand at a witty bit of Toryism—but the editor pleaded off, upon the danger of inconsistency. These differences first cooled, and soon dissolved their federation.—To return to our gay dinner. As the claret was taking its rounds, Jeffrey introduced some good-natured eulogy of his old supporters—Sydney Smith, Brougham, and Horner. 'Come,' says Scott, 'you can't say too much about Sydney or Brougham, but I will not admire your Horner: he always put me in mind of Obadiah's bull, who, although, as Father Shandy observed, he never produced a calf, went through his business with such a grave demeanor, that he always maintained his credit in the parish!' The fun of the illustration tempted him to this sally, I believe; but Horner's talents did not lie in humor, and his economical labors were totally uncongenial to the mind of Scott."

I shall conclude this chapter with a summary of booksellers' accounts. Marmion was first printed in a splendid quarto, price one guinea and a half. The 2000 copies of this edition were all disposed of in less than a month, when a second, of 3000 copies, in 8vo, was sent to press. There followed a third and a fourth edition, each of 3000, in 1809; a fifth, of 2000, early in 1810; and a sixth, of 3000, in two volumes, crown 8vo, with twelve designs by Singleton, before the end of that year; a seventh, of 4000, and an eighth, of 5000 copies, 8vo, in 1811; a ninth, of 3000, in 1815; a tenth, of 500, in 1820; an eleventh, of 500, and a twelfth, of 2000 copies, in foolscap, both in 1825. The legitimate sale in this country, therefore, down to the time of its being included in the first collective edition of his poetical works, amounted to 31,000; and the aggregate of that sale down to the period at which I am writing, (May, 1836,) may be stated at 50,000 copies. I presume it is right for me to facilitate the task of future historians of our literature by preserving these details as often as I can. Such particulars respecting many of the great works even of the last century, are already sought for with vain regret; and I anticipate no day when the student of English civil ization will pass without curiosity the contemporary reception of the Tale of Flodden Field.

CHAPTER VI.

EDITION OF DRYDEN PUBLISHED—AND CRITICISED BY MR. HALLAM—WEBER'S ROMANCES—EDITIONS OF QUEEN-HOO-HALL—CAPTAIN CARLETON'S MEMOIRS—THE MEMOIRS OF ROBERT CARY, EARL OF MONMOUTH—THE SADLER PAPERS—AND THE SOMERS' TRACTS—EDITION OF SWIFT BEGUN—LETTERS TO JOANNA BAILLIE AND GEORGE ELLIS ON THE AFFAIRS OF THE PENINSULA—JOHN STRUTHERS—JAMES HOGG—VISIT OF MR. MORRITT—MR. MORRITT'S REMINISCENCES OF ASHESTIEL—SCOTT'S DOMESTIC LIFE.—1808.

Before Marmion was published, a heavy task, begun earlier than the poem and continued throughout its progress, had been nearly completed; and there appeared in the last week of April, 1808, "The Works of John Dryden, now first collected; illustrated with notes historical, critical, and explanatory, and a Life of the Author.—By Walter Scott, Esq. Eighteen volumes, 8vo." This was the bold speculation of William Miller of Albemarle Street, London; and the editor's fee, at forty guineas the volume, was £756. The bulk of the collection, the neglect into which a majority of the pieces included in it had fallen, the obsoleteness of the party politics which had so largely exercised the author's pen, and the indecorum, not seldom running into flagrant indecency, by which transcendent genius had ministered to the appetites of a licentious age, all combined to make the warmest of Scott's friends and admirers doubt whether even his skill and reputation would be found sufficient to insure the success of this undertaking. It was, however, better received than any one, except perhaps the courageous bookseller himself, had anticipated. The entire work was reprinted in 1821; and more lately the Life of Dryden has been twice republished in collective editions of Scott's prose miscellanies; nor, perhaps, does that class of his writings include any piece of considerable extent that has, on the whole, obtained higher estimation.

This edition of Dryden was criticised in the Edinburgh Review for October, 1808, with great ability, and on the whole, with admirable candor. The industry and perspicacity with which Scott had carried through his editorial researches and annotations were acknowledged in terms which, had he known the name of his reviewer, must have been doubly gratifying to his feelings; and it was confessed that, in the life of his author, he had corrected with patient honesty, and filled up with lucid and expansive detail, the sometimes careless and often naked outline of Johnson's masterly Essay on the same subject. It would be superfluous to quote in this place a specimen of critical skill which has already enjoyed such wide circulation, and which will hereafter, no doubt, be included in the miscellaneous prose works of Hallam. The points of political faith on which that great writer dissents from the editor of Dryden, would, even if I had the inclination to pursue such a discussion, lead me far astray from the immediate object of these pages; they embrace questions on which the best and wisest of our countrymen will probably continue to take opposite sides, as long as our past history excites a living interest, and our literature is that of an active nation. On the poetical character of Dryden I think the editor and his critic will be found to have expressed substantially much the same judgment; when they appear to differ, the battle strikes me as being about words rather than things, as is likely to be the case when men of such abilities and attainments approach a subject remote from their personal passions. As might have been expected, the terse and dexterous reviewer has often the better in this logomachy; but when the balance is struck, we discover here, as elsewhere, that Scott's broad and masculine understanding had, by whatever happy hardihood, grasped the very result to which others win their way by the more cautious processes of logical investigation. While nothing has been found easier than to attack his details, his general views on critical questions have seldom, if ever, been successfully inpugned.

I wish I could believe that Scott's labors had been sufficient to recall Dryden to his rightful station, not in the

opinion of those who make literature the business or chief solace of their lives—for with them he had never forfeited it—but in the general favor of the intelligent public. That such has been the case, however, the not rapid sale of two editions, aided as they were by the greatest of living names, can be no proof; nor have I observed among the numberless recent speculations of the English booksellers, a single reprint of even those tales, satires, and critical essays, not to be familiar with which would, in the last age, have been considered as disgraceful in any one making the least pretension to letters. In the hope of exciting the curiosity, at least, of some of the thousands of young persons who seem to be growing up in contented ignorance of one of the greatest of our masters, I shall transcribe what George Ellis, whose misgivings about Scott's edition, when first undertaken, had been so serious, was pleased to write some months after its completion.

"Claremont, 23d September, 1808.

"I must confess that I took up the book with some degree of trepidation, considering an edition of such a writer as on every account *periculosæ plenum opus aleæ;* but as soon as I became acquainted with your plan, I proceeded boldly, and really feel at this moment sincerely grateful to you for much exquisite amusement. It now seems to me that your critical remarks ought to have occurred to myself. Such a passionate admirer of Dryden's fables, the noblest specimen of versification (in my mind) that is to be found in any modern language, ought to have perused his theatrical pieces with more candor than I did, and to have attributed to the bad taste of the age, rather than to his own, the numerous defects by which those hasty compositions are certainly deformed. I ought to have considered that whatever Dryden wrote must, for some reason or other, be worth reading; that his bombast and his indelicacy, however disgusting, were not without their use to any one who took an interest in our literary history; that, in short, there are a thousand reflections which I ought to have made, and never did make, and the result was that *your* Dryden was to me a perfectly new book. It is certainly painful to see a race-horse in a hackney-chaise, but when one considers that he will suffer infinitely less from the violent exertion to which he is condemned, than a creature of inferior race—and that the wretched cock-tail on whom the same task is usually imposed, must shortly become a martyr in the service, one's conscience becomes more at ease, and we are enabled to enjoy Dr. Johnson's

favorite pleasure of rapid motion without much remorse on the score of its cruelty. Since, then, your hackneyman is not furnished with a whip, and you can so easily canter from post to post, go on and prosper!"

To return for a moment to Scott's Biography of Dryden —the only life of a great poet which he has left us, and also his only detailed work on the personal fortunes of one to whom literature was a profession—it was penned just when he had begun to apprehend his own destiny. On this point of view, forbidden to contemporary delicacy, we may now pause with blameless curiosity; and if I be not mistaken, it will reward our attention. Seriously as he must have in those days been revolving the hazards of literary enterprise, he could not, it is probable, have handled any subject of this class without letting out here and there thoughts and feelings proper to his own biographer's province; but, widely as he and his predecessor may appear to stand apart as regards some of the most important both of intellectual and moral characteristics, they had nevertheless many features of resemblance, both as men and as authors; and I doubt if the entire range of our annals could have furnished a theme more calculated to keep Scott's scrutinizing interest awake, than that which opened on him as he contemplated step by step the career of Dryden.

There are grave lessons which that story was not needed to enforce upon his mind; he required no such beacon to make him revolt from paltering with the dignity of woman, or the passions of youth, or insulting by splenetic levities the religious convictions of any portion of his countrymen. But Dryden's prostitution of his genius to the petty bitterness of political warfare, and the consequences both as to the party he served, and the antagonists he provoked, might well supply matter for serious consideration to the author of the Melville song. "Where," says Scott, "is the expert swordsman that does not delight in the flourish of his weapon? and a brave man will least of all withdraw himself from his ancient standard when the tide of battle beats against it." But he says also,—and I know enough of his own then recent experiences, in his intercourse with some

who had been among his earliest and dearest associates, not to apply the language to the circumstances that suggested it,—"He who keenly engages in political controversy, must not only encounter the vulgar abuse which he may justly contemn, but the altered eye of friends whose regard is chilled;" nor, when he adds, that "the protecting zeal of his party did not compensate Dryden for the loss of those whom he alienated in their service," can I help connecting this reflection too with his own subsequent abstinence from party personalities, in which, had the expert swordsman's delight in the flourish of his weapon prevailed, he might have rivalled the success of either Dryden or Swift, to be repaid like them by the settled rancor of Whigs, and the jealous ingratitude of Tories.

It is curious enough to compare the hesitating style of his apology for that tinge of evanescent superstition which seems to have clouded occasionally Dryden's bright and solid mind, with the open avowal that he has "pride in recording his author's decided admiration of old ballads and popular tales;" and perhaps his personal feelings were hardly less his prompter where he dismisses with brief scorn the sins of negligence and haste which had been so often urged against Dryden. "Nothing," he says, "is so easily attained as the power of presenting the extrinsic qualities of fine painting, fine music, or fine poetry; the beauty of color and outline, the combination of notes, the melody of versification, may be imitated by artists of mediocrity; and many will view, hear, or peruse their performances, without being able positively to discover why they should not, since composed according to all the rules, afford pleasure equal to those of Raphael, Handel, or Dryden. The deficiency lies in the vivifying spirit which, like *alcohol*, may be reduced to the same principle in all the fine arts. The French are said to possess the best possible rules for building ships of war, although not equally remarkable for their power of fighting them. When criticism becomes a pursuit separate from poetry, those who follow it are apt to forget that the legitimate ends of the art for which they lay down rules, are instruction and delight, and that these points being attained,

by what road soever, entitles a poet to claim the prize of successful merit. Neither did the learned authors of these disquisitions sufficiently attend to the general disposition of mankind, which cannot be contented even with the happiest imitations of former excellence, but demands novelty as a necessary ingredient for amusement. To insist that every epic poem shall have the plan of the Iliad, and every tragedy be modelled by the rules of Aristotle, resembles the principle of the architect who should build all his houses with the same number of windows and of stories. It happened, too, inevitably, that the critics, in the plenipotential authority which they exercised, often assumed as indispensable requisites of the drama, or epopeia, circumstances which, in the great authorities they quoted, were altogether accidental or indifferent. These they erected into laws, and handed down as essential; although the forms prescribed have often as little to do with the merit and success of the original from which they are taken, as the shape of the drinking-glass with the flavor of the wine which it contains." These sentences appear, from the dates, to have been penned immediately after the biographer of Dryden (who wrote no epic) had perused the Edinburgh Review on Marmion.

I conclude with a passage, in writing which he seems to have anticipated the only serious critical charge that was ever brought against his edition of Dryden as a whole—namely, the loose and irregular way in which his own æsthetical notions are indicated, rather than expounded. "While Dryden," says Scott, "examined, discussed, admitted, or rejected, the rules proposed by others, he forbore, from *prudence*, *indolence*, or *a regard for the freedom of Parnassus*, to erect himself into a legislator. His doctrines are scattered without system or pretence to it:—it is impossible to read far, without finding some maxim for doing, or forbearing, which every student of poetry will do well to engrave upon the tablets of his memory; but the author's mode of instruction is neither harsh nor dictatorial."

On the whole, it is impossible to doubt that the success

of Dryden in rapidly reaching, and, till the end of a long life, holding undisputed, the summit of public favor and reputation, in spite of his "brave neglect" of minute finishing, narrow laws, and prejudiced authorities, must have had a powerful effect in nerving Scott's hope and resolution for the wide ocean of literary enterprise into which he had now fairly launched his bark. Like Dryden, he felt himself to be "amply stored with acquired knowledge, much of it the fruits of early reading and application;" anticipated that, though "while engaged in the hurry of composition, or overcome by the lassitude of continued literary labor," he should sometimes "draw with too much liberality on a tenacious memory," no "occasional imperfections would deprive him of his praise;" in short, made up his mind that "pointed and nicely-turned lines, sedulous study, and long and repeated correction and revision," would all be dispensed with, provided their place were supplied, as in Dryden, by "rapidity of conception, a readiness of expressing every idea, without losing any thing by the way," "perpetual animation and elasticity of thought;" and language "never labored, never loitering, never (in Dryden's own phrase) *cursedly confined.*"

Scott's correspondence, about the time when his Dryden was published, is a good deal occupied with a wild project of his friend Henry Weber—that of an extensive edition of our Ancient Metrical Romances, for which, in their own original dimensions, the enthusiastic German supposed the public appetite to have been set on edge by the "Specimens" of Ellis, and imperfectly gratified by the text of Sir Tristrem. Scott assured him that Ellis's work had been popular, rather in spite than by reason of the antique verses introduced here and there among his witty and sparkling prose; while Ellis told him, with equal truth, that the Tristrem had gone through two editions, simply owing to the celebrity of its editor's name; and that, of a hundred that had purchased the book, ninety-nine had read only the preface and notes, but not one syllable of True Thomas's "quaint Inglis." Weber, in reply to Ellis, alleged that Scott had not had leisure to consider his plan so fully as it

deserved; that nothing could prevent its success, provided Scott would write a preliminary essay, and let his name appear in the title-page, along with his own; and though Scott wholly declined this last proposal, he persisted for some months in a negotiation with the London booksellers, which ended as both his patrons had foreseen.

"But how is this?"—(Ellis writes)—"Weber tells me he is afraid Mr. Scott will not be able to do any thing for the recommendation of his *Romances*, because he is himself engaged in no less than five different literary enterprises, some of them of immense extent. Five? Why, no combination of bone and blood can possibly stand this; and Sir John Sinclair, however successful in pointing out the best modes of feeding common gladiators, has not discovered the means of training minds to such endless fatigue. I dare not ask you for an account of these projects, nor even for a letter during the continuance of this seven years' apprenticeship, and only request that you will, after the completion of your labors, take measures to lay my ghost, which will infallibly be walking before that time, and suffering all the pains of unsatisfied curiosity. Seriously, I don't quite like your imposing on yourself such a series of tasks. Some *one* is, I believe, always of service—because, whatever you write at the same time *con amore*, comes in as a relaxation, and is likely to receive more spirit and gayety from that circumstance; besides which, every species of study perhaps is capable of furnishing allusions, and adding vigor and solidity to poetry. Too constant attention to what they call their art, and too much solicitude about its minutiæ, has been, I think, the fault of every poet since Pope; perhaps it was his too—perhaps the frequent and varied studies imposed upon him by his necessities, contributed, in some measure, to Dryden's characteristic splendor of style. Yet, surely, the best poet of the age ought not to be incessantly employed in the drudgeries of literature. I shall lament if you are effectually distracted from the exercise of the talent in which you are confessedly without a rival."

The poet answers as follows:—

"My giving my name to Weber's Romances is out of the question, as assuredly I have not time to do any thing that can entitle it to stand in his title-page; but I will do all I can for him in the business. By the by, I wish he would be either more chary in his communications on the subject of my employments, or more accurate. I often employ his assistance in making extracts, &c., and I may say to him, as Lord Ogleby does to Canton, that he never sees me *badiner* a little with a subject, but he suspects mischief—to wit, an edition. In the mean time, suffice it to say, that I have

done with poetry for some time—it is a scourging crop, and ought not to be hastily repeated. Editing, therefore, may be considered as a green crop of turnips or peas, extremely useful for those whose circumstances do not admit of giving their farm a summer fallow. Swift is my *grande opus* at present, though I am under engagements, of old standing, to write a life of Thomson from some original materials. I have completed an edition of some State Papers of Sir Ralph Sadler, which I believe you will find curious; I have, moreover, arranged for republication the more early volumes of Somers' Tracts; but these are neither toilsome nor exhausting labors. Swift, in fact, is my only task of great importance. My present official employment leaves my time very much my own, even while the courts are sitting—and entirely so in the vacation. My health is strong, and my mind active; I will therefore do as much as I can with justice to the tasks I have undertaken, and rest when advanced age and more independent circumstances entitle me to repose."

This letter is dated Ashestiel, October 8, 1808; but it carries us back to the month of April, when the Dryden was completed. His engagements with London publishers respecting the Somers and the Sadler, were, I believe, entered into before the end of 1807; but Constable appears to have first ascertained them, when he accompanied the second cargo of Marmion to the great southern market; and, alarmed at the prospect of losing his hold on Scott's industry, he at once invited him to follow up his Dryden by an edition of Swift on the same scale,—offering, moreover, to double the rate of payment which he had contracted for with the London publisher of the Dryden; that is to say, to give him £1500 for the new undertaking. This munificent tender was accepted without hesitation; and as early as May, I find Scott writing to his literary allies in all directions for books, pamphlets, and MS. materials likely to be serviceable in completing and illustrating the Life and Works of the Dean of St. Patrick's. While these were accumulating about him, which they soon did in greater abundance than he had anticipated, he concluded his labors on Sadler's State Papers, characteristically undervalued in his letter to Ellis, and kept pace, at the same time, with Ballantyne, as the huge collection of the Somers' Tracts continued to move through the press. The Sadler was

published in the course of 1809, in three large volumes, quarto; but the last of the thirteen equally ponderous tomes to which Somers extended, was not dismissed from his desk until towards the conclusion of 1812.

But these were not his only tasks during the summer and autumn of 1808; and if he had not "*five* different enterprises" on his hands when Weber said so to Ellis, he had more than five very soon after. He edited, this year, Strutt's unfinished romance of Queenhoo-Hall, and equipped the fourth volume with a conclusion in the fashion of the original;* but how little he thought of this matter may be guessed from one of his notes to Ballantyne, in which he says, "I wish you would see how far the copy of Queenhoo-Hall, sent last night, extends, that I may not write more nonsense than enough." The publisher of this work was John Murray, of London. It was immediately preceded by a reprint of Captain Carleton's Memoirs of the War of the Spanish Succession, to which he gave a lively preface and various notes; and followed by a similar edition of the Memoirs of Robert Cary, Earl of Monmouth,—each of these being a single octavo, printed by Ballantyne and published by Constable.

The republication of Carleton,† Johnson's eulogy of which fills a pleasant page in Boswell, had probably been suggested by the lively interest which Scott took in the first outburst of Spanish patriotism consequent on Napoleon's transactions at Bayonne. There is one passage in the preface which I must indulge myself by transcribing. Speaking of the absurd recall of Peterborough, from the command in which he had exhibited such a wonderful combination of patience and prudence with military daring, he says:—"One ostensible reason was, that Peterborough's

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* See General Preface to Waverley, pp. xiv–xvii. and Appendix No. II. p. lxv.

† I believe it is now pretty generally believed that Carleton's Memoirs were among the numberless fabrications of De Foe; but in this case, as in that of his *Cavalier*, he no doubt had before him the rude journal of some officer who had really served in the campaigns described with such an inimitable air of truth.

parts were of too lively and mercurial a quality, and that his letters showed more wit than became a General;—a common-place objection, raised by the dull malignity of common-place minds, against those whom they see discharging with ease and indifference the tasks which they themselves execute (if at all) with the sweat of their brow and in the heaviness of their hearts. There is a certain hypocrisy in business, whether civil or military, as well as in religion, which they will do well to observe, who, not satisfied with discharging their duty, desire also the good repute of men." It was not long before some of the dull malignants of the Parliament House began to insinuate what at length found a dull and dignified mouthpiece in the House of Commons—that if a Clerk of Session had any real business to do, it could not be done well by a man who found time for more literary enterprises than any other author of the age undertook—"wrote more books," Lord Archibald Hamilton serenely added, "than any body could find leisure to read"—and, moreover, mingled in general society as much as many that had no pursuit but pleasure.

The eager struggling of the different booksellers to engage Scott at this time, is a very amusing feature in the voluminous correspondence before me. Had he possessed treble the energy for which it was possible to give any man credit, he could never have encountered a tithe of the projects that the post brought day after day to him, announced with extravagant enthusiasm, and urged with all the arts of conciliation. I shall mention only one out of at least a dozen gigantic schemes which were thus proposed before he had well settled himself to his Swift; and I do so, because something of the kind was a few years later carried into execution. This was a General Edition of British Novels, beginning with De Foe and reaching to the end of the last century; to be set forth with biographical prefaces and illustrative notes by Scott, and printed of course by Ballantyne. The projector was Murray, who was now eager to start on all points in the race with Constable; but this was not, as we shall see presently, the only business that prompted my enterprising friend's first visit to Ashestiel.

Conversing with Scott, many years afterwards, about the tumult of engagements in which he was thus involved, he said, "Ay, it was enough to tear me to pieces, but there was a wonderful exhilaration about it all: my blood was kept at fever-pitch—I felt as if I could have grappled with any thing and every thing; then, there was hardly one of all my schemes that did not afford me the means of serving some poor devil of a brother author. There were always huge piles of materials to be arranged, sifted and indexed—volumes of extracts to be transcribed—journeys to be made hither and thither, for ascertaining little facts and dates,—in short, I could commonly keep half-a-dozen of the ragged regiment of Parnassus in tolerable case." I said he must have felt something like what a locomotive engine on a railway might be supposed to do, when a score of coal-wagons are seen linking themselves to it the moment it gets the steam up, and it rushes on its course regardless of the burden. "Yes," said he, laughing, and making a crashing cut with his axe, (for we were felling larches,) "but there was a cursed lot of dung-carts too." He was seldom, in fact, without some of these appendages; and I admired nothing in him more than the patient courtesy, the unwearied gentle kindness with which he always treated them, in spite of their delays and blunders, to say nothing of the almost incredible vanity and presumption which more than one of them often exhibited in the midst of their fawning; and I believe, with all their faults, the worst and weakest of them repaid him by a canine fidelity of affection. This part of Scott's character recalls by far the most pleasing trait in that of his last predecessor in the plenitude of literary authority—Dr. Johnson. There was, perhaps, nothing (except the one great blunder) that had a worse effect on the course of his pecuniary fortunes, than the readiness with which he exerted his interest with the booksellers on behalf of inferior writers. Even from the commencement of his connection with Constable in particular, I can trace a continual series of such applications. They stimulated the already too sanguine publisher to numberless risks; and when these failed, the result was, in one shape

or other, some corresponding deduction from the fair profits of his own literary labor. "I like well," Constable was often heard to say in the sequel, "I like well Scott's *ain bairns*—but heaven preserve me from those of his fathering!"

Every now and then, however, he had the rich compensation of finding that his interference had really promoted the worldly interests of some meritorious obscure. Early in 1808 he tasted this pleasure, in the case of a poetical shoemaker of Glasgow, Mr. John Struthers, a man of rare worth and very considerable genius, whose "Poor Man's Sabbath" was recommended to his notice by Joanna Baillie, and shortly after published, at his desire, by Mr. Constable. He thus writes to Miss Baillie from Ashestiel, on the 9th of May, 1808:—

"Your letter found me in this quiet corner, and while it always gives me pride and pleasure to hear from you, I am truly concerned at Constable's unaccountable delays. I suppose that, in the hurry of his departure for London, his promise to write to Mr. Struthers had escaped; as for any desire to quit his bargain, it is out of the question. If Mr. Struthers will send to my house in Castle Street the manuscript designed for the press, I will get him a short bill for the copy-money the moment Constable returns, or perhaps before he comes down. He may rely on the bargain being definitively settled, and the printing will, I suppose, be begun immediately on the great bibliopolist's return; on which occasion I shall have, according to the good old phrase, 'a crow to pluck with him, and a pock to put the feathers in.' I heartily wish we could have had the honor to see Miss Agnes and you at our little farm, which is now in its glory—all the twigs bursting into leaf, and all the lambs skipping on the hills. I have been fishing almost from morning till night; and Mrs. Scott, and two ladies our guests, are wandering about on the banks in the most Arcadian fashion in the world. We are just on the point of setting out on a pilgrimage to the 'bonny bush aboon Traquhair,' which I believe will occupy us all the morning. Adieu, my dear Miss Baillie. Nothing will give me more pleasure than to hear that you have found the northern breezes fraught with inspiration. You are not entitled to spare yourself, and none is so deeply interested in your labors as your truly respectful friend and admirer,

WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S. We quit our quiet pastures to return to Edinburgh on the 10th. So Mr. Struthers's parcel will find me there, if he is pleased to intrust me with the care of it."

Mr. Struthers's volume was unfortunate in bearing a title so very like that of James Grahame's Sabbath, which, though not written sooner, had been published a year or two before. This much interfered with its success; yet it was not, on the whole, unsuccessful: it put some £30 or £40 into the pocket of a good man, to whom this was a considerable supply; but it made his name and character known, and thus served him far more essentially; for he wisely continued to cultivate his poetical talents, without neglecting the opportunity, thus afforded him through them, of pursuing his original calling under better advantages. It is said that the solitary and meditative generation of cobblers have produced a larger list of murders and other domestic crimes than any other mechanical trade, except the butchers; but the sons of Crispin have, to balance their account, a not less disproportionate catalogue of poets; and foremost among these stands the pious author of the Poor Man's Sabbath; one of the very few that have had sense and fortitude to resist the innumerable temptations to which any measure of celebrity exposes persons of their class. I believe Mr. Struthers still survives to enjoy the retrospect of a long and virtuous life. His letters to Scott are equally creditable to his taste and his feelings; and some time after we shall find him making a pilgrimage of gratitude to Ashestiel. *

James Hogg was by this time beginning to be generally known and appreciated in Scotland; and the popularity of his "Mountain Bard" encouraged Scott to more strenuous intercession in his behalf. I have before me a long array of letters on this subject, which passed between Scott and the Earl of Dalkeith and his brother Lord Montagu, in 1808. Hogg's prime ambition at this period was to procure an ensigncy in a militia regiment; and he seems to have

* I am happy to learn, as this page passes through the press, from my friend Mr. John Kerr of Glasgow, that, about three years ago, Mr. Struthers was appointed keeper of Stirling's Library, a collection of some consequence, in that city. The selection of him for this respectable situation reflects honor on the directors of the institution —(December, 1836.)

set little by Scott's representations that the pay of such a situation was very small, and that, if he obtained it, he would probably find his relations with his brother officers far from agreeable. There was, however, another objection, which Scott could not hint to the aspirant himself, but which seems to have been duly considered by those who were anxious to promote his views. Militia officers of that day were by no means unlikely to see their nerves put to the test; and the Shepherd's—though he wrote some capital war-songs, especially *Donald Macdonald*—were not heroically strung. This was, in truth, no secret among his early intimates, though he had not measured himself at all exactly on that score, and was even tempted, when he found there was no chance of the militia epaulette, to threaten that he would "list for a soldier" in a marching regiment. Notwithstanding at least one melancholy precedent, the excise, which would have suited him almost as badly as "hugging Brown Bess," was next thought of; and the Shepherd himself seems to have entered into that plan with considerable alacrity; but I know not whether he changed his mind, or what other cause prevented such an appointment from taking place. After various shiftings, he at last obtained, as we shall see, from the late Duke of Buccleuch's munificence, the gratuitous life-rent of a small farm in the vale of Yarrow; and had he contented himself with the careful management of its fields, the rest of his days might have been easy. But he could not withstand the attractions of Edinburgh, which carried him away from Altrive for months every year; and when at home, a warm and hospitable disposition, so often stirred by vanity less pardonable than his, made him convert his cottage into an unpaid hostelrie for the reception of endless troops of thoughtless admirers; and thus, in spite of much help and much forbearance, he was never out of one set of pecuniary difficulties before he had begun to weave the meshes of some fresh entanglement. *In pace requiescat.* There will never be such an Ettrick Shepherd again.

The following is an extract from a letter of Scott's to his brother Thomas, dated 20th June, 1808:—

"Excellent news to-day from Spain—yet I wish the patriots had a leader of genius and influence. I fear the Castilian nobility are more sunk than the common people, and that it will be easier to find armies than generals. A Wallace, Dundee, or Montrose, would be the man for Spain at this moment. It is, however, a consolation that, though the grandees of the earth, when the post of honor becomes the post of danger, may be less ambitious of occupying it, there may be some hidalgo among the mountains of Asturias with all the spirit of the Cid Ruy Diaz, or Don Pelayo, or Don Quixote, if you will, whose gallantry was only impeachable from the objects on which he exercised it. It strikes me as very singular to have all the places mentioned in Don Quixote and Gil Blas now the scenes of real and important events. Gazettes dated from Oviedo, and gorges fortified in the Sierra Morena, sounds like history in the land of romance.

"James Hogg has driven his pigs to a bad market. I am endeavoring, as a *pis aller*, to have him made an Excise officer, that station being, with respect to Scottish geniuses, the grave of all the Capulets. Witness Adam Smith, Burns, &c."

I mentioned the name of Joanna Baillie (for "who," as Scott says in a letter of this time, "ever speaks of Miss Sappho?") in connection with the MS. of the Poor Man's Sabbath. From Glasgow, where she had found out Struthers in April, she proceeded to Edinburgh, and took up her abode for a week or two under Scott's roof. Their acquaintance was thus knit into a deep and respectful affection on both sides; and henceforth they maintained a close epistolary correspondence, which will, I think, supply this compilation with some of the most interesting of its materials. But within a few weeks after Joanna's departure, he was to commence another intimacy not less sincere and cordial; and when I name Mr. Morritt of Rokeby, I have done enough to prepare many of my readers to expect not inferior gratification from the still more abundant series of letters in which, from this time to the end of his life, Scott communicated his thoughts and feelings to one of the most accomplished men that ever shared his confidence. He had now reached a period of life after which real friendships are but seldom formed; and it is fortunate that another English one had been thoroughly compacted before death cut the ties between him and George Ellis—because his

dearest intimates within Scotland had of course but a slender part in his written correspondence.

Several mutual friends had written to recommend Mr. Morritt to his acquaintance—among others, Mr. W. S. Rose and Lady Louisa Stuart. His answer to her ladyship I must insert here, for the sake of the late inimitable Lydia White, who so long ruled without a rival in the soft realm of *blue* Mayfair.

"Edinburgh, 16th June, 1808.

"My dear Lady Louisa,

"Nothing will give us more pleasure than to have the honor of showing every attention in our power to Mr. and Mrs. Morritt, and I am particularly happy in a circumstance that at once promises me a great deal of pleasure in the acquaintance of your Ladyship's friends, and affords me the satisfaction of hearing from you again. Pray don't triumph over me too much in the case of Lydia. I stood a very respectable siege; but she caressed my wife, coaxed my children, and made, by dint of cake and pudding, some impression even upon the affections of my favorite dog:—so, when all the outworks were carried, the mere fortress had no choice but to surrender on honorable terms. To the best of my thinking, notwithstanding the cerulean hue of her stockings, and a most plentiful stock of eccentric affectation, she is really at bottom a good-natured woman, with much liveliness and some talent. She is now set out to the Highlands, where she is likely to encounter many adventures. Mrs. Scott and I went as far as Loch Catrine with her, from which jaunt I have just returned. We had most heavenly weather, which was peculiarly favorable to my fair companions' zeal for sketching every object that fell in their way, from a castle to a pigeon-house. Did your Ladyship ever travel with a *drawing* companion? Mine drew like cart-horses, as well in laborious zeal as in effect; for, after all, I could not help hinting that the cataracts delineated bore a singular resemblance to haycocks, and the rocks much correspondence to large old-fashioned cabinets with their folding-doors open. So much for Lydia, whom I left on her journey through the Highlands, but by what route she had not resolved. I gave her three plans, and think it likely she will adopt none of them: moreover, when the executive government of postilions, landlords, and Highland boatmen, devolves upon her English servant instead of me, I am afraid the distresses of the errant damsel will fall a little beneath the dignity of romances. All this nonsense is *entre nous*, for Miss White has been actively zealous in getting me some Irish correspondence about Swift, and otherwise very obliging.

"It is not with my inclination that I fag for the booksellers; but what can I do? My poverty and not my will consents. The

income of my office is only reversionary, and my private fortune much limited. My poetical success fairly destroyed my prospects of professional success, and obliged me to retire from the bar; for though I had a competent share of information and industry, who would trust their cause to the author of the Lay of the Last Minstrel? Now, although I do allow that an author should take care of his literary character, yet I think the least thing that his literary character can do in return is to take some care of the author, who is unfortunately, like Jeremy, in *Love for Love*, furnished with a set of tastes and appetites which would do honor to the income of a Duke if he had it. Besides, I go to work with Swift *con amore;* for, like Dryden, he is an early favorite of mine. The Marmion is nearly out, and I have made one or two alterations on the third edition, with which the press is now groaning. So soon as it is, it will make the number of copies published within the space of six months amount to eight thousand—an immense number surely, and enough to comfort the author's wounded feelings, had the claws of the reviewers been able to reach him through the *steel jack* of true Border indifference. Your Ladyship's much obliged and faithful servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

Mr. and Mrs. Morritt reached Edinburgh soon after this letter was written. Scott showed them the lions of the town and its vicinity, exactly as if he had nothing else to attend to but their gratification; and Mr. Morritt recollects with particular pleasure one long day spent in rambling along the Esk by Roslin and Hawthornden,

"Where Jonson sat in Drummond's social shade,"

down to the old haunts of Lasswade.

"When we approached that village," says the Memorandum with which Mr. Morritt favors me, "Scott, who had laid hold of my arm, turned along the road in a direction not leading to the place where the carriage was to meet us. After walking some minutes towards Edinburgh, I suggested that we were losing the scenery of the Esk, and, besides, had Dalkeith Palace yet to see. 'Yes,' said he, 'and I have been bringing you where there is little enough to be seen—only that Scotch cottage,' (one by the road side, with a small garth;) 'but, though not worth looking at, I could not pass it. It was our first country house when newly married, and many a contrivance we had to make it comfortable. I made a dining-table for it with my own hands. Look at these two miserable willow-trees on either side the gate into the enclosure; they are tied together at the top to be an arch, and a cross made of two sticks over them is not yet decayed. To be

sure it is not much of a lion to show a stranger; but I wanted to see it again myself, for I assure you that after I had constructed it, *mamma*' (Mrs. Scott) 'and I both of us thought it so fine, we turned out to see it by moonlight, and walked backwards from it to the door, in admiration of our own magnificence and its picturesque effect. I did want to see if it was still there—so now we will look after the barouche, and make the best of our way to Dalkeith.' Such were the natural feelings that endeared the author of Marmion and the Lay to those who 'saw him in his happier hours of social pleasure.' His person at that time may be exactly known from Raeburn's first picture, which had just been executed for his bookseller, Constable, and which was a most faithful likeness of him and his dog Camp. The literal fidelity of the portraiture, however, is its principal merit. The expression is serious and contemplative, very unlike the hilarity and vivacity then habitual to his speaking face, but quite true to what it was in the absence of such excitement. His features struck me at first as common-place and heavy,—but they were almost always lighted up by the flashes of the mind within. This required a hand more masterly than Raeburn's; and indeed, in my own opinion, Chantrey alone has in his bust attained that, in his case, most difficult task of portraying the features faithfully, and yet giving the real and transient expression of the countenance when animated.

"We passed a week in Edinburgh, chiefly in his society and that of his friends the Mackenzies. We were so far on our way to Brahan Castle, in Ross-shire. Scott unlocked all his antiquarian lore, and supplied us with numberless *data*, such as no guide-book could have furnished, and such as his own Monkbarns might have delighted to give. It would be idle to tell how much pleasure and instruction his advice added to a tour in itself so productive of both, as well as of private friendships and intimacies, now too generally terminated by death, but never severed by caprice or disappointment. His was added to the number by our reception now in Edinburgh, and, on our return from the Highlands, at Ashestiel—where he had made us promise to visit him, saying that the farm-house had pigeon-holes enough for such of his friends as could live, like him, on Tweed salmon and Forest mutton. There he was the cherished friend and kind neighbor of every middling Selkirkshire yeoman, just as easily as in Edinburgh he was the companion of clever youth and narrative old age in refined society. He carried us one day to Melrose Abbey or Newark—another, to course with mountain greyhounds by Yarrow braes or St. Mary's loch, repeating every ballad or legendary tale connected with the scenery—and on a third, we must all go to a farmer's *kirn*, or harvest-home, to dance with Border lasses on a barn floor, drink whisky punch, and enter with him into all the gossip and good fellowship of his neighbors, on a complete footing of

unrestrained conviviality, equality, and mutual respect. His wife and happy young family were clustered round him, and the cordiality of his reception would have unbent a misanthrope.

"At this period his conversation was more equal and animated than any man's that I ever knew. It was most characterized by the extreme felicity and fun of his illustrations, drawn from the whole encyclopædia of life and nature, in a style sometimes too exuberant for written narrative, but which to him was natural and spontaneous. A hundred stories, always apposite, and often interesting the mind by strong pathos, or eminently ludicrous, were daily told, which, with many more, have since been transplanted, almost in the same language, into the Waverley novels and his other writings. These and his recitations of poetry, which can never be forgotten by those who knew him, made up the charm that his boundless memory enabled him to exert to the wonder of the gaping lovers of wonders. But equally impressive and powerful was the language of his warm heart, and equally wonderful were the conclusions of his vigorous understanding, to those who could return or appreciate either. Among a number of such recollections, I have seen many of the thoughts which then passed through his mind embodied in the delightful prefaces annexed late in life to his poetry and novels. Those on literary quarrels and literary irritability are exactly what he then expressed. Keenly enjoying literature as he did, and indulging his own love of it in perpetual composition, he always maintained the same estimate of it as subordinate and auxiliary to the purposes of life, and rather talked of men and events than of books and criticism. Literary fame, he always said, was a bright feather in the cap, but not the substantial cover of a well-protected head. This sound and manly feeling was what I have seen described by some of his biographers as *pride;* and it will always be thought so by those whose own vanity can only be gratified by the admiration of others, and who mistake shows for realities. None valued the love and applause of others more than Scott; but it was to the love and applause of those he valued in return that he restricted the feeling—without restricting the kindness. Men who did not, or would not, understand this, perpetually mistook him—and, after loading him with undesired eulogy, perhaps in his own house neglected common attention or civility to other parts of his family. It was on such an occasion that I heard him murmur in my ear, 'Author as I am, I wish these good people would recollect that I began with being a gentleman, and don't mean to give up the character.' Such was all along his feeling, and this, with a slight prejudice common to Scotchmen in favor of ancient and respectable family descent, constituted what in Grub Street is called his *pride*. It was, at least, what Johnson would have justly called *defensive* pride. From all other, and still more from mere vanity, I never knew any man so remarkably free."

The farmer at whose annual *kirn* Scott and all his household were, in those days, regular guests, was Mr. Laidlaw, the Duke of Buccleuch's tenant on the lands of Peel, which are only separated from the eastern terrace of Ashestiel by the ravine and its brook. Mr. Laidlaw was himself possessed of some landed property in the same neighborhood, and being considered as wealthy, and fond of his wealth, he was usually called among the country people *Laird Nippy*—an expressive designation which it would be difficult to translate. Though a very dry, demure, and taciturn old presbyterian, he could not resist the Sheriff's jokes; nay, he even gradually subdued his scruples so far, as to become a pretty constant attendant at his "*English printed prayers*" on the Sundays; which, indeed, were by this time rather more popular than quite suited the capacity of the parlor-chapel. Mr. Laidlaw's wife was a woman of superior mind and manners—a great reader, and one of the few to whom Scott liked lending his books; for most strict and delicate was he always in the care of them, and, indeed, hardly any trivial occurrence ever seemed to touch his temper at all, except any thing like irreverent treatment of a book. The intercourse between the family at Ashestiel and this worthy woman and her children, was a constant interchange of respect and kindness; but I remember to have heard Scott say that the greatest compliment he had ever received in his life was from the rigid old farmer himself; for, years after he had left Ashestiel, he discovered casually that special care had been taken to keep the turf seat on *the Shirra's knowe* in good repair: and this was much from Nippy.

And here I must set down a story which, most readers will smile to be told, was often repeated by Scott; and always with an air that seemed to me, in spite of his endeavors to the contrary, as grave as the usual aspect of Laird Nippy of the Peel. This neighbor was a distant kinsman of his dear friend William Laidlaw;—so distant, that elsewhere in that condition they would scarcely have remembered any community of blood;—but they both traced their descent, in the ninth degree, to an ancestress,

who, in the days of John Knox, fell into trouble from a suspicion of witchcraft. In her time the Laidlaws were rich and prosperous, and held rank among the best gentry of Tweeddale; but in some evil hour, her husband, the head of his blood, reproached her with her addiction to the black art, and she, in her anger, cursed the name and lineage of Laidlaw. Her only son, who stood by, implored her to revoke the malediction; but in vain. Next day, however, on the renewal of his entreaties, she carried him with her into the woods, made him slay a heifer, sacrificed it to the power of evil in his presence, and then, collecting the ashes in her apron, invited the youth to see her commit them to the river. "Follow them," said she, "from stream to pool, as long as they float visible, and as many streams as you shall then have passed, for so many generations shall your descendants prosper. After that they shall, like the rest of the name, be poor, and take their part in my curse." The streams he counted were nine; and now, Scott would say, "look round you in this country, and sure enough the Laidlaws are one and all landless men, with the single exception of Auld Nippy!" Many times had I heard both him and William Laidlaw tell this story, before any suspicion got abroad that Nippy's wealth rested on insecure foundations. Year after year, we never escorted a stranger by the Peel, but I heard the tale;—and at last it came with a new conclusion;—"and now, think whatever we choose of it, my good friend Nippy is a bankrupt."

Mr. Morritt's mention of the "happy young family clustered round him" at Laird Nippy's *kirn*, reminds me that I ought to say a few words on Scott's method of treating his children in their early days. He had now two boys and two girls;—and he never had more.* He was not one of

* I may as well transcribe here the rest of the record in Scott's family Bible. After what was quoted in a former chapter, it thus proceeds:—

"24to die Octobris 1799.—Margareta C. Scott, filiam apud Edinburgum edidit 15° Novembris 1799, in Ecclesiam Christianam recepta fuit per baptismum dicta filia, nomenque ei adjectum Charlotta Sophia, per virum reverendum Danielem Sandford; sponsoribus prænobili Arthuro Marchione de Downshire, Sophia Dumergue, et Anna Rutherford matre mea.

those who take much delight in a mere infant; but no father ever devoted more time and tender care to his offspring than he did to each of his, as they successively reached the age when they could listen to him and understand his talk. Like their mute playmates, Camp and the greyhounds, they had at all times free access to his study; he never considered their tattle as any disturbance; they went and came as pleased their fancy; he was always ready to answer their questions; and when they, unconscious how he was engaged, entreated him to lay down his pen and tell them a story, he would take them on his knee, repeat a ballad or a legend, kiss them, and set them down again to their marbles or ninepins, and resume his labor as if refreshed by the interruption. From a very early age he made them dine at table, and "to sit up to supper" was the great reward when they had been "very good bairns." In short, he considered it as the highest duty as well as the sweetest pleasure of a parent to be the companion of his children; he partook all their little joys and sorrows, and made his kind unformal instructions to blend so easily and playfully with the current of their own sayings and doings, that, so far from regarding him with any distant awe, it was never thought that any sport or diversion could go on in the right way, unless *papa* were of the party, or that the rainiest day could be dull so he were at home.

Of the irregularity of his own education he speaks with considerable regret, in the autobiographical fragment written this year at Ashestiel; yet his practice does not look as if that feeling had been strongly rooted in his mind;—for he never did show much concern about regulating systematically what is usually called education in the case

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"Margareta C. Scott puerum edidit 28vo Octobris A. D. 1801 apud Edinburgum; nomenque ei adjectum Gualterus, cum per v. rev. Doctorem Danielem Sandford baptizatus erat.

"M. C. Scott filiam edidit apud Edinburgum 2do die Februarij 1803, quæ in Ecclesiam recepta fuit per virum reverendum Doctorem Sandford, nomenque ei adjectum Anna Scott.

"24to Decem: 1805.—M. C. Scott apud Edinburgum puerum edidit; qui baptizatus erat per virum reverendum Joannem Thomson, Ministrum de Duddingstone prope Edinburgum, nomenque Carolus illi datum."

of his own children. It seemed, on the contrary, as if he attached little importance to any thing else, so he could perceive that the young curiosity was excited—the intellect, by whatever springs of interest, set in motion. He detested and despised the whole generation of modern children's books, in which the attempt is made to convey accurate notions of scientific minutiæ; delighting cordially, on the other hand, in those of the preceding age, which, addressing themselves chiefly to the imagination, obtain through it, as he believed, the best chance of stirring our graver faculties also. He exercised the memory, by selecting for tasks of recitation passages of popular verse the most likely to catch the fancy of children; and gradually familiarized them with the ancient history of their own country, by arresting attention, in the course of his own oral narrations, on incidents and characters of a similar description. Nor did he neglect to use the same means of quickening curiosity as to the events of sacred history. On Sunday he never rode—at least not until his growing infirmity made his pony almost necessary to him; for it was his principle that all domestic animals have a full right to their Sabbath of rest; but after he had read the church service, he usually walked with his whole family, dogs included, to some favorite spot at a considerable distance from the house—most frequently the ruined tower of Elibank—and there dined with them in the open air on a basket of cold provisions, mixing his wine with the water of the brook beside which they all were grouped around him on the turf; and here, or at home, if the weather kept them from their ramble, his Sunday talk was just such a series of biblical lessons as that which we have preserved for the permanent use of rising generations, in his Tales of a Grandfather, on the early history of Scotland. I wish he had committed that other series to writing too;—how different that would have been from our thousand compilations of dead epitome and imbecile cant! He had his Bible, the Old Testament especially, by heart; and on these days inwove the simple pathos or sublime enthusiasm of Scripture, in whatever story he was telling, with the same picturesque richness as he did, in his week-day tales, the quaint Scotch of Pitscot-

tie, or some rude, romantic old rhyme from Barbour's Bruce or Blind Harry's Wallace.

By many external accomplishments, either in girl or boy, he set little store. He delighted to hear his daughters sing an old ditty, or one of his own framing; but, so the singer appeared to feel the spirit of her ballad, he was not at all critical of the technical execution. There was one thing, however, on which he fixed his heart hardly less than the ancient Persians of the Cyropædia; like them, next to love of truth, he held love of horsemanship for the prime point of education. As soon as his eldest girl could sit a pony, she was made the regular attendant of his mountain rides; and they all, as they attained sufficient strength, had the like advancement. He taught them to think nothing of tumbles, and habituated them to his own reckless delight in perilous fords and flooded streams; and they all imbibed in great perfection his passion for horses—as well, I may venture to add, as his deep reverence for the more important article of that Persian training. "Without courage," he said, "there cannot be truth; and without truth there can be no other virtue."

He had a horror of boarding-schools; never allowed his girls to learn any thing out of his own house; and chose their governess—(Miss Miller)—who about this time was domesticated with them, and never left them while they needed one,—with far greater regard to her kind good temper and excellent moral and religious principles, than to the measure of her attainments in what are called fashionable accomplishments. The admirable system of education for boys in Scotland combines all the advantages of public and private instruction; his carried their satchels to the High School, when the family was in Edinburgh, just as he had done before them, and shared, of course, the evening society of their happy home. But he rarely, if ever, left them in town when he could himself be in the country; and at Ashestiel he was, for better or for worse, his eldest boy's daily tutor after he began Latin.

The following letter will serve, among other things, to supply a few more details of the domestic life of Ashestiel:—

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie—Hampstead.*

"Sept 20, 1808.

"My dear Miss Baillie,

"The law, you know, makes the husband answerable for the debts of his wife, and therefore gives him a right to approach her creditors with an offer of payment; so that, after witnessing many fruitless and broken resolutions of my Charlotte, I am determined, rather than she and I shall appear longer insensible of your goodness, to intrude a few lines on you to answer the letter you honored her with some time ago. The secret reason of her procrastination is, I believe, some terror of writing in English—which you know is not her native language—to one who is as much distinguished by her command of it as by the purposes she adapts it to. I wish we had the command of what my old friend Pitscottie calls 'a blink of the sun or a whip of the whirlwind,' to transport you to this solitude before the frost has stripped it of its leaves. It is not, indeed, (even I must confess,) equal in picturesque beauty to the banks of Clyde and Evan; but it is so sequestered, so simple, and so solitary, that it seems just to have beauty enough to delight its inhabitants, without a single attraction for any visitor, except those who come for its inhabitants' sake. And in good sooth, whenever I was tempted to envy the splendid scenery of the lakes of Westmoreland, I always endeavor to cure my fit of spleen by recollecting that they attract as many idle, insipid, and indolent gazers as any celebrated beauty in the land, and that our scene of pastoral hills and pure streams is like Touchstone's mistress, 'a poor thing, but mine own.' I regret, however, that these celebrated beauties should have frowned, wept, or pouted upon you, when you honored them by your visit in summer. Did Miss Agnes Baillie and you meet with any of the poetical inhabitants of that district—Wordsworth, Southey, or Coleridge? The two former would, I am sure, have been happy in paying their respects to you; with the habits and tastes of the latter I am less acquainted.

"Time has lingered with me from day to day in expectation of being called southward; I now begin to think my journey will hardly take place till winter, or early in spring. One of the most pleasant circumstances attending it will be the opportunity to pay my homage to you, and to claim withal a certain promise concerning a certain play, of which you were so kind as to promise me a reading. I hope you do not permit indolence to lay the paring of her little finger upon you; we cannot afford the interruption to your labors which even that might occasion. And 'What are *you* doing?' your politeness will perhaps lead you to say: in answer, —Why, I am very like a certain ancient King, distinguished in the Edda, who, when Lok paid him a visit,—

> 'Was twisting of collars his dogs to hold,
> And combing the mane of his courser bold.'

If this idle man's employment required any apology, we must seek it in the difficulty of seeking food to make savory messes for our

English guests; for we are eight miles from market, and must call in all the country sports to aid the larder. We had here, two days ago, a very pleasant English family, the Morritts of Rokeby Park, in Yorkshire. The gentleman wandered over all Greece, and visited the Troad, to aid in confuting the hypothesis of old Bryant, who contended that Troy town was not taken by the Greeks. His erudition is, however, not of an overbearing kind, which was lucky for me, who am but a slender classical scholar. Charlotte's kindest and best wishes attend Miss Agnes Baillie, in which I heartily and respectfully join;—to you she offers her best apology for not writing, and hopes for your kind forgiveness. I ought, perhaps, to make one for taking the task off her hands, but we are both at your mercy; and I am ever your most faithful, obedient and admiring servant,

WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S. I have had a visit from the author of the Poor Man's Sabbath, whose affairs with Constable are, I hope, settled to his satisfaction. I got him a few books more than were originally stipulated, and have endeavored to interest Lord Leven,* and through him Mr. Wilberforce, and through them both the saints in general, in the success of this modest and apparently worthy man. Lord Leven had promised his exertions; and the interest of the party, if exerted, would save a work tenfold inferior in real merit. What think you of Spain? The days of William Wallace and the Cid Ruy Diaz de Bivar seem to be reviving there."

CHAPTER VII.

QUARREL WITH MESSRS. CONSTABLE AND HUNTER — JOHN BALLANTYNE ESTABLISHED AS A BOOKSELLER IN EDINBURGH — SCOTT'S LITERARY PROJECTS — THE EDINBURGH ANNUAL REGISTER, &c. — MEETING OF JAMES BALLANTYNE AND JOHN MURRAY — MURRAY'S VISIT TO ASHESTIEL — POLITICS — THE PENINSULAR WAR — PROJECT OF THE QUARTERLY REVIEW — CORRESPONDENCE WITH ELLIS, GIFFORD, MORRITT, SOUTHEY, SHARPE, &c. — 1808–1809.

THE reader does not need to be reminded that Scott at this time had business enough on his hand besides combing

* The late Earl of Leven had married a lady of the English family of Thornton, whose munificent charities are familiar to the readers of Cowper's Life and Letters; hence, probably, his Lordship's influence with the party alluded to in the text.

the mane of Brown Adam, and twisting couples for Douglas and Percy. He was deep in Swift; and the Ballantyne press was groaning under a multitude of works, some of them already mentioned, with almost all of which his hand as well as his head had something more or less to do. But a serious change was about to take place in his relations with the spirited publishing house which had hitherto been the most efficient supporters of that press; and his letters begin to be much occupied with differences and disputes which, uninteresting as the details would now be, must have cost him many anxious hours in the apparently idle autumn of 1808. Mr. Constable had then for his partner Mr. Alexander Gibson Hunter, afterwards Laird of Blackness, to whose intemperate language, much more than to any part of Constable's own conduct, Scott ascribed this unfortunate alienation; which, however, as well as most of my friend's subsequent misadventures, I am inclined to trace, in no small degree, to the influence which a third person, hitherto unnamed, was about this time beginning to exercise over the concerns of James Ballantyne.

John Ballantyne, a younger brother of Scott's schoolfellow, had been originally bred to their father's trade of a *merchant* (that is to say, a dealer in every thing from broadcloth to children's tops) at Kelso; but James's rise in the world was not observed by him without ambitious longings; for he too had a love, and he at least fancied that he had a talent, for literature. He left Kelso abruptly for the chances of the English metropolis. After a short residence in London, where, among other things, he officiated for a few months as clerk in a banking-house, the continued intelligence of the printer's prosperity determined him to return to Scotland. Not finding any opening at the moment in Edinburgh, he again tried the shop at Kelso; but his habits had not been improved by his brief sojourn in London, and the business soon melted to nothing in his hands. His goods were disposed of by auction for the benefit of his creditors—the paternal shop was finally closed; and John again quitted his birthplace, under circumstances which, as I shall show in the sequel, had left a deep and painful trace even upon that volatile mind.

He was a quick, active, intrepid little fellow; and in society so very lively and amusing, so full of fun and merriment, such a thoroughly light-hearted droll, all-over quaintness and humorous mimicry; and, moreover, such a keen and skilful devotee to all manner of field-sports, from fox-hunting to badger-baiting inclusive, that it is no wonder he should have made a favorable impression on Scott, when he appeared in Edinburgh in this destitute plight, and offered to assist his brother in the management of a concern by which James's comparatively indolent habits were now very severely tried. The contrast between the two brothers was not the least of the amusement; indeed, that continued to amuse him to the last. The elder of these is painted to the life in an early letter of Leyden's, which, on the doctor's death, he, though not (I fancy) without wincing, permitted Scott to print:—"Methinks I see you with your confounded black beard, bull-neck, and upper lip turned up to your nose, while one of your eyebrows is cocked perpendicularly, and the other forms pretty well the base of a right-angled triangle, opening your great, gloating eyes, and crying—*But, Leyden!!!*" James was a short, stout, well-made man, and would have been considered a handsome one, but for these grotesque frowns, starts, and twistings of his features, set off by a certain mock-majesty of walk and gesture, which he had, perhaps, contracted from his usual companions, the emperors and tyrants of the stage. His voice in talk was grave and sonorous, and he sung well, (theatrically well,) in a fine, rich bass. John's tone in singing was a sharp treble—in conversation, something between a croak and a squeak. Of *his* style of story-telling it is sufficient to say that the late Charles Matthews's "old Scotch lady" was but an imperfect copy of the original, which the inimitable comedian first heard in my presence from his lips. He was shorter than James, but lean as a scarecrow, and he rather hopped than walked: his features, too, were naturally good, and he twisted them about quite as much, but in a very different fashion. The elder brother was a gormand—the younger liked his bottle and his bowl, as well as, like Johnny Armstrong, "a hawk, a hound, and a

fair woman." Scott used to call the one Aldiborontiphoscophornio, the other Rigdumfunnidos. They both entertained him; they both loved and revered him; and, I believe, would have shed their heart's blood in his service: but they both, as men of affairs, deeply injured him—and, above all, the day that brought John into pecuniary connection with him was the blackest in his calendar. A more reckless, thoughtless, improvident adventurer never rushed into the serious responsibilities of business; but his cleverness, his vivacity, his unaffected zeal, his gay fancy, always seeing the light side of every thing, his imperturbable good-humor and buoyant elasticity of spirits, made and kept him such a favorite, that I believe Scott would have as soon ordered his dog to be hanged, as harbored, in the darkest hour of perplexity, the least thought of discarding "jocund Johnny."

The great bookseller of Edinburgh was a man of calibre infinitely beyond these Ballantynes. Though with a strong dash of the sanguine, without which, indeed, there can be no great projector in any walk of life, Archibald Constable was one of the most sagacious persons that ever followed his profession. A brother poet of Scott's says to him, a year or two before this time, "Our butteraceous friend at the Cross turns out a deep draw-well;" and another eminent literator, still more closely connected with Constable, had already, I believe, christened him "The Crafty." Indeed, his fair and very handsome physiognomy carried a bland astuteness of expression, not to be mistaken by any who could read the plainest of nature's hand-writing. He made no pretensions to literature—though he was, in fact, a tolerable judge of it generally, and particularly well skilled in the department of Scotch antiquities. He distrusted himself, however, in such matters, being conscious that his early education had been very imperfect; and, moreover, he wisely considered the business of a critic as quite as much out of his "proper line" as authorship itself. But of that "proper line," and his own qualifications for it, his estimation was ample; and—often as I may have smiled at the lofty serenity of his self-

complacence—I confess I now doubt whether he rated himself too highly as a master in the true science of the bookseller. He had, indeed, in his mercantile character, one deep and fatal flaw—for he hated accounts, and systematically refused, during the most vigorous years of his life, to examine or sign a balance-sheet; but for casting a keen eye over the remotest indications of popular taste—for anticipating the chances of success and failure in any given variety of adventure—for the planning and invention of his calling—he was not, in his own day at least, surpassed; and among all his myriad of undertakings, I question if any one that really originated with himself, and continued to be superintended by his own care, ever did fail. He was as bold as far-sighted—and his disposition was as liberal as his views were wide. Had he and Scott from the beginning trusted as thoroughly as they understood each other; had there been no third parties to step in, flattering an overweening vanity on the one hand into presumption, and on the other side spurring the enterprise that wanted nothing but a bridle, I have no doubt their joint career might have been one of unbroken prosperity. But the Ballantynes were jealous of the superior mind, bearing, and authority of Constable; and, though he too had a liking for them both personally—esteemed James's literary tact, and was far too much of a humorist not to be very fond of the younger brother's company—he could never away with the feeling that they intervened unnecessarily, and left him but the shadow where he ought to have had the substantial lion's share of confidence. On his part, again, he was too proud a man to give entire confidence where that was withheld from himself; and, more especially, I can well believe that a frankness of communication as to the real amount of his capital and general engagements of business, which would have been the reverse of painful to him in habitually confidential intercourse with Scott, was out of the question when Scott's proposals and suggestions were to be met in conference, not with his own manly simplicity, but the buckram propensity of the one, or the burlesque levity of the other, of his plenipotentiaries.

The disputes in question seem to have begun very shortly after the contract for the Life and Edition of Swift had been completed; and we shall presently see reason to infer that Scott to a certain degree was influenced at the moment by a soreness originating in the recent conduct of Mr. Jeffrey's Journal—that great primary source of the wealth and authority of the house of Constable. The then comparatively little-known bookseller of London, who was destined to be ultimately Constable's most formidable rival in more than one department of publishing, has told me, that when he read the article on Marmion, and another on general politics, in the same number of the Edinburgh Review, he said to himself—"Walter Scott has feelings both as a gentleman and a Tory, which these people must now have wounded. The alliance between him and the whole clique of the Edinburgh Review, its proprietor included, is shaken;" and, as far at least as the political part of the affair was concerned, John Murray's sagacity was not at fault. We have seen with what thankful alacrity he accepted a small share in the adventure of Marmion—and with what brilliant success that was crowned; nor is it wonderful that a young bookseller, conscious of ample energies, should now have watched with eagerness the circumstances which seemed not unlikely to place within his own reach a more intimate connection with the first great living author in whose works he had ever had any direct interest. He forthwith took measures for improving and extending his relations with James Ballantyne, through whom, as he guessed, Scott could best be approached. His tenders of employment for the Canongate press were such, that the apparent head of the firm proposed a conference at Ferrybridge, in Yorkshire; and there Murray, after detailing some of his own literary plans—particularly that already alluded to, of a Novelist's Library—in his turn sounded Ballantyne so far, as to resolve at once on pursuing his journey into Scotland. Ballantyne had said enough to satisfy him that the project of setting up a new publishing house in Edinburgh, in opposition to Constable, was already all but matured, and he, on the instant, pro-

posed himself for its active coöperator in the metropolis. Ballantyne proceeded to open his budget further, mentioning, among other things, that the author of Marmion had "both another Scotch poem and a *Scotch novel* on the stocks;" and had, moreover, chalked out the design of an Edinburgh Annual Register, to be conducted in opposition to the politics and criticism of Constable's Review. These tidings might have been enough to make Murray proceed farther northwards; but there was a scheme of his own which had for some time deeply occupied his mind, and the last article of this communication determined him to embrace the opportunity of opening it in person at Ashestiel. He arrived there about the middle of October. The 26th Number of the Edinburgh Review, containing Mr. Brougham's celebrated article, entitled "Don Cevallos, on the usurpation of Spain," had just been published; and one of the first things Scott mentioned in conversation was, that he had so highly resented the tone of that essay, as to give orders that his name might be discontinued on the list of subscribers.* Mr. Murray could not have wished better auspices for the matter he had come to open; and, shortly after his departure, Scott writes as follows to his prime political confidant:—

"*To George Ellis, Esq., Claremont.*

"Ashestiel, Nov. 2d, 1808.

"Dear Ellis,

"We had, equally to our joy and surprise, a flying visit from Heber, about three weeks ago. He staid but three days—but, between old stories and new, we made them very merry in their passage. During his stay, John Murray, the bookseller in Fleet Street, who has more real knowledge of what concerns his business than any of his brethren—at least than any of them that I know—came to canvass a most important plan, of which I am now, in 'dern privacie,' to give you the outline. I had most strongly

* 'When the 26th Number appeared, Mr. Scott wrote to Constable in these terms:—"The Edinburgh Review *had* become such as to render it impossible for me to continue a contributor to it.—*Now* it is such as I can no longer continue to receive or read it." The list of the then subscribers exhibits in an indignant dash of Constable's pen opposite Mr. Scott's name, the word—"STOPT!!!"'—*Letter from Mr R. Cadell.*

recommended to our Lord Advocate * to think of some counter measures against the Edinburgh Review, which, politically speaking, is doing incalculable damage. I do not mean this in a mere party view;—the present ministry are not all that I could wish them—for (Canning excepted) I doubt there is among them too much *self-seeking*, as it was called in Cromwell's time; and what is their misfortune, if not their fault, there is not among them one in the decided situation of paramount authority, both with respect to the others and to the Crown, which is, I think, necessary, at least in difficult times, to produce promptitude, regularity, and efficiency, in measures of importance. But their political principles are sound English principles, and compared to the greedy and inefficient horde which preceded them, they are angels of light and of purity. It is obvious, however, that they want defenders both in and out of doors. Pitt's

> ——'Love and fear glued many friends to him;
> And now he's fallen, those tough commixtures melt.'

Were this only to effect a change of hands, I should expect it with more indifference; but I fear a change of principles is designed. The Edinburgh Review tells you coolly, 'We foresee a speedy revolution in this country as well as Mr. Cobbett;' and to say the truth, by degrading the person of the Sovereign—exalting the power of the French armies, and the wisdom of their counsels—holding forth that peace (which they allow can only be purchased by the humiliating prostration of our honor) is indispensable to the very existence of this country—I think that, for these two years past, they have done their utmost to hasten the accomplishment of their own prophecy. Of this work 9000 copies are printed quarterly, and no genteel family *can* pretend to be without it, because, independent of its politics, it gives the only valuable literary criticism which can be met with. Consider, of the numbers who read this work, how many are there likely to separate the literature from the politics—how many youths are there upon whose minds the flashy and bold character of the work is likely to make an indelible impression; and think what the consequence is likely to be.

"Now, I think there is balm in Gilead for all this; and that the cure lies in instituting such a Review in London as should be conducted totally independent of bookselling influence, on a plan as liberal as that of the Edinburgh, its literature as well supported, and its principles English and constitutional. Accordingly, I have been given to understand that Mr. William Gifford is willing to become the conductor of such a work, and I have written to him, at the Lord Advocate's desire, a very voluminous letter on the subject. Now, should this plan succeed, you must hang your

* The Right Hon. John Campbell Colquhoun, husband of Scott's early friend, Mary Anne Erskine.

birding-piece on its hooks, take down your old Anti-jacobin armor, and 'remember your swashing blow.' It is not that I think this projected Review ought to be exclusively or principally political —this would, in my opinion, absolutely counteract its purpose, which I think should be to offer to those who love their country, and to those whom we would wish to love it, a periodical work of criticism conducted with equal talent, but upon sounder principle than that which has gained so high a station in the world of letters. Is not this very possible? In point of learning, you Englishmen have ten times our scholarship; and as for talent and genius, 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than any of the rivers in Israel?' Have we not yourself and your cousin, the Roses, Malthus, Matthias, Gifford, Heber, and his brother? Can I not procure you a score of blue-caps who would rather write for us than for the Edinburgh Review if they got as much pay by it? 'A good plot, good friends, and full of expectation—an excellent plot, excellent friends!'

"Heber's fear was, lest we should fail in procuring regular, steady contributors; but I know so much of the interior discipline of reviewing, as to have no apprehension of that. Provided we are once set a-going by a few dashing numbers, there would be no fear of enlisting regular contributors; but the amateurs must bestir themselves in the first instance. From Government we should be entitled to expect confidential communication as to points of fact (so far as fit to be made public) in our political disquisitions. With this advantage, our good cause and St. George to boot, we may at least divide the field with our formidable competitors, who, after all, are much better at cutting than parrying, and whom uninterrupted triumph has as much unfitted for resisting a serious attack, as it has done Buonaparte for the Spanish war. Jeffrey is, to be sure, a man of most uncommon versatility of talent, but what then?

> 'General Howe is a gallant commander;
> There are others as gallant as he.'

Think of all this, and let me hear from you very soon on the subject. Canning is, I have good reason to know, very anxious about the plan. I mentioned it to Robert Dundas, who was here with his lady for two days on a pilgrimage to Melrose, and he approved highly of it. Though no literary man, he is judicious, *clair-voyant*, and uncommonly sound-headed, like his father, Lord Melville. With the exceptions I have mentioned, the thing continues a secret.

"I am truly happy you think well of the Spanish business: they have begun in a truly manly and rounded manner, and, barring internal dissension, are, I think, very likely to make their part good. Buonaparte's army has come to assume such a very motley description as gives good hope of its crumbling down on the frost of adversity setting in. The Germans and Italians have deserted him in troops, and I greatly doubt his being able to assemble a

very huge force at the foot of the Pyrenees, unless he trusts that the terror of his name will be sufficient to keep Germany in subjugation, and Austria in awe. The finances of your old Russian friends are said to be ruined out and out; such is the account we have from Leith.

"Enough of this talk. Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

The readiness with which Mr. Ellis entered into the scheme thus introduced to his notice, encouraged Scott to write still more fully; indeed, I might fill half a volume with the correspondence now before me concerning the gradual organization and ultimately successful establishment of the Quarterly Review. But my only object is to illustrate the liberality and sagacity of Scott's views on such a subject, and the characteristic mixture of strong and playful language in which he developed them; and I conceive that this end will be sufficiently accomplished by extracting two more letters of this bulky series. Already, as we have seen, before opening the matter even to Ellis, he had been requested to communicate his sentiments to the proposed editor of the work, and he had done so in these terms:—

"*To William Gifford, Esq., London.*

"Edinburgh, October 25, 1808.

"Sir,

"By a letter from the Lord Advocate of Scotland, in consequence of a communication between his Lordship and Mr. Canning on the subject of a new Review to be attempted in London, I have the pleasure to understand that you have consented to become the editor—a point which, in my opinion, goes no small way to insure success to the undertaking. In offering a few observations upon the details of such a plan, I only obey the commands of our distinguished friends, without having the vanity to hope that I can point out any thing which was not likely to have at once occurred to a person of Mr. Gifford's literary experience and eminence. I shall, however, beg permission to offer you my sentiments, in the miscellaneous way in which they occur to me. The extensive reputation and circulation of the Edinburgh Review is chiefly owing to two circumstances: First, that it is entirely uninfluenced by the booksellers, who have contrived to make most of the other Reviews merely advertising sheets to puff off their own publications; and, secondly, the very handsome recompense which

the editor not only holds forth to his regular assistants, but actually forces upon those whose circumstances and rank make it a matter of total indifference to them. The editor, to my knowledge, makes a point of every contributor receiving this *bonus*, saying, that Czar Peter, when working in the trenches, received pay as a common soldier. This general rule removes all scruples of delicacy, and fixes in his service a number of persons who might otherwise have felt shy in taking the price of their labors, and even the more so because it was an object of convenience to them. There are many young men of talent and enterprise who are extremely glad of a handsome apology to work for fifteen or twenty guineas, although they would not willingly be considered as hired reviewers. From this I deduce two points of doctrine: first, that the work must be considered as independent of all bookselling influence; secondly, that the labors of the contributors must be regularly and handsomely recompensed, and that it must be a rule that each one shall accept of the price of his labor. John Murray of Fleet Street, a young bookseller of capital and enterprise, and with more good sense and propriety of sentiment than fall to the share of most of the trade, made me a visit at Ashestiel a few weeks ago, and as I found he had had some communication with you upon the subject, I did not hesitate to communicate my sentiments to him on these and some other points of the plan, and I thought his ideas were most liberal and satisfactory.

"The office of the editor is of such importance, that had you not been pleased to undertake it, I fear the plan would have fallen wholly to the ground. The full power of control must, of course, be vested in the editor for selecting, curtailing, and correcting the contributions to the Review. But this is not all; for, as he is the person immediately responsible to the bookseller that the work (amounting to a certain number of pages, more or less) shall be before the public at a certain time, it will be the editor's duty to consider in due time the articles of which each number ought to consist, and to take measures for procuring them from the persons best qualified to write upon such and such subjects. But this is sometimes so troublesome, that I foresee with pleasure you will be soon obliged to abandon your resolution of writing nothing yourself. At the same time, if you will accept of my services as a sort of jackal or lion's provider, I will do all in my power to assist in this troublesome department of editorial duty. But there is still something behind, and that of the last consequence. One great resource to which the Edinburgh editor turns himself, and by which he gives popularity even to the duller articles of his Review, is accepting contributions from persons of inferior powers of writing, provided he understand the books to which the criticisms relate; and as such are often of stupefying mediocrity, he renders them palatable by throwing in a handful of spice—namely, any lively paragraph or entertaining illustration that occurs to him in

reading them over. By this sort of veneering, he converts, without loss of time, or hinderance of business, articles which, in their original state, might hang in the market, into such goods as are not likely to disgrace those among which they are placed. This seems to be a point in which an editor's assistance is of the last consequence, for those who possess the knowledge necessary to review books of research or abstruse disquisition, are very often unable to put the criticism into a readable, much more a pleasant and captivating form; and as their science cannot be attained 'for the nonce,' the only remedy is to supply their deficiencies, and give their lucubrations a more popular turn.

"There is one opportunity possessed by you in a particular degree—that of access to the best sources of political information. It would not, certainly, be advisable that the work should assume, especially at the outset, a professed political character. On the contrary, the articles on science and miscellaneous literature ought to be of such a quality as might fairly challenge competition with the best of our contemporaries. But as the real reason of instituting the publication is the disgusting and deleterious doctrine with which the most popular of our Reviews disgraces its pages, it is essential to consider how this warfare should be managed. On this ground, I hope it is not too much to expect from those who have the power of assisting us, that they should, on topics of great national interest, furnish the Reviewers, through the medium of their editor, with accurate views of points of fact, so far as they are fit to be made public. This is the most delicate, and yet most essential part of our scheme. On the one hand, it is certainly not to be understood that we are to be held down to advocate upon all occasions the cause of administration. Such a dereliction of independence would render us entirely useless for the purpose we mean to serve. On the other hand, nothing will render the work more interesting than the public learning, not from any vaunt of ours, but from their own observation, that we have access to early and accurate information in point of fact. The Edinburgh Review has profited much by the pains which the Opposition party have taken to possess the writers of all the information they could give them on public matters. Let me repeat that you, my dear sir, from enjoying the confidence of Mr. Canning and other persons in power, may easily obtain the confidential information necessary to give credit to the work, and communicate it to such as you may think proper to employ in laying it before the public.

"Concerning the mode and time of publication, I think you will be of opinion that monthly, in the present dearth of good subjects of review, would be too often, and that a quarterly publication would both give you less trouble, and be amply sufficient for discussing all that is likely to be worth discussion. The name to be assumed is of some consequence, though any one of little pretensions will do. We might, for example, revive the 'English

Review,' which was the name of Gilbert Stewart's. Regular correspondents ought to be sought after, but I should be little afraid of finding such, were the reputation of the Review once decidedly established by three or four numbers of the very first order. As it would be essential to come on the public by surprise, that no unreasonable expectation or artificial misrepresentation might prejudice its success, the authors employed in the first number ought to be few and of the first rate. The choosing of subjects would also be a matter of anxious consideration: for example, a good and distinct essay on Spanish affairs would be sufficient to give a character to the work. The lucubrations of the Edinburgh Review, on that subject, have done the work great injury with the public, and I am convinced that of the many thousands of copies now distributed of each Number, the quantity might be reduced one half at least, by any work appearing, which, with the same literary talent and independent character, should speak a political language more familiar to the British ear than that of subjugation to France. At the same time, as I before hinted, it will be necessary to maintain the respect of the public by impartial disquisition; and I would not have it said, as may usually be predicated of other Reviews, that the sentiments of the critic were less determined by the value of the work than by the purpose it was written to serve. If a weak brother will unadvisedly put forth his hand to support even the ark of the constitution, I would expose his arguments, though I might approve of his intention and of his conclusions. I should think an open and express declaration of political tenets, or of opposition to works of a contrary tendency, ought for the same reason to be avoided. I think, from the little observation I have made, that the Whigs suffer most deeply from cool, sarcastic reasoning and occasional ridicule. Having long had a sort of command of the press, from the neglect of all literary assistance on the part of those who thought their good cause should fight its own battle, they are apt to feel with great acuteness any assault in that quarter; and having been long accustomed to push, have in some degree lost the power to parry. It will not, therefore, be long before they make some violent retort, and I should not be surprised if it were to come through the Edinburgh Review. We might then come into close combat with a much better grace than if we had thrown down a formal defiance. I am, therefore, for going into a state of hostility without any formal declaration of war. Let our forces, for a Number or two, consist of volunteers and amateurs, and when we have acquired some reputation, we shall soon levy and discipline forces of the line.

"After all, the matter is become very serious,—eight or nine thousand copies of the Edinburgh Review are regularly distributed, merely because there is no other respectable and independent publication of the kind. In this city, where there is not one Whig out of twenty men who read the work, many hundreds are

sold; and how long the generality of readers will continue to dislike politics, so artfully mingled with information and amusement, is worthy of deep consideration. But it is not yet too late to stand in the breach; the first Number ought, if possible, to be out in January, and if it can burst among them like a bomb, without previous notice, the effect will be more striking. Of those who might be intrusted in the first instance, you are a much better judge than I am. I think I can command the assistance of a friend or two here, particularly William Erskine, the Lord Advocate's brother-in-law and my most intimate friend. In London you have Malthus, George Ellis, the Roses, *cum pluribus aliis*. Richard Heber was with me when Murray came to my farm, and knowing his zeal for the good cause, I let him into our counsels. In Mr. Frere we have the hopes of a potent ally. The Rev. Reginald Heber would be an excellent coadjutor, and when I come to town I will sound Matthias. As strict secrecy would of course be observed, the diffidence of many might be overcome;—for scholars you can be at no loss while Oxford stands where it did,—and I think there will be no deficiency in the scientific articles.

"Once more I have to apologize for intruding on you this hasty, and therefore long, and probably confused letter; I trust your goodness will excuse my expressing any apology for submitting to your better judgment my sentiments on a plan of such consequence. I expect to be called to London early in the winter, perhaps next month. If you see Murray, as I suppose you will, I presume you will communicate to him such of my sentiments as have the good fortune to coincide with yours. Among the works in the first Number, Fox's history, Grattan's speeches, a notable subject for a quizzing article, and any tract or pamphlet that will give an opportunity to treat of the Spanish affairs, would be desirable subjects of criticism. I am, with great respect, sir, your most obedient servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

On the 18th of November, Scott enclosed to Mr. Ellis "the rough scroll" (that now transcribed) of his letter to Mr. Gifford;—"this being," he says, "one of the very few epistles of which I thought it will be as well to retain a copy." He then proceeds as follows:—

"Supposing you to have read said scroll, you must know further, that it has been received in a most favorable manner by Mr. Gifford, who approves of its contents in all respects, and that Mr. Canning has looked it over, and promised such aid as is therein required. I therefore wish you to be apprized fully of what could hardly be made the subject of writing, unless in all the confidence of friendship. Let me touch a string of much delicacy—the po-

litical character of the Review. It appears to me that this should be of a liberal and enlarged nature, resting upon principles—indulgent and conciliatory as far as possible upon mere party questions—but stern in detecting and exposing all attempts to sap our constitutional fabric. Religion is another slippery station; here also I would endeavor to be as impartial as the subject will admit of. This character of impartiality, as well as the maintenance of a high reputation in literature, is of as great consequence to such of our friends as are in the Ministry, as our more direct efforts in their favor; for these will only be successful in proportion to the influence we shall acquire by an extensive circulation; to procure which, the former qualities will be essentially necessary. Now, *entre nous*, will not our editor be occasionally a little warm and pepperish?—essential qualities in themselves, but which should not quite constitute the leading character of such a publication. This is worthy of a *memento*.

"As our start is of such immense consequence, don't you think Mr. Canning, though unquestionably our Atlas, might for a day find a Hercules on whom to devolve the burden of the globe, while he writes us a review? I know what an audacious request this is; but suppose he should, as great statesmen sometimes do, take a political fit of the gout, and absent himself from a large ministerial dinner which might give it him in good earnest,—dine at three on a chicken and a pint of wine,—and lay the foundation at least of one good article? Let us once get afloat, and our labor is not worth talking of; but, till then, all hands must work hard.

"Is it necessary to say that I agree entirely with you in the mode of treating even delinquents? The truth is, there is policy, as well as morality, in keeping our swords clear as well as sharp, and not forgetting the gentlemen in the critics. The public appetite is soon gorged with any particular style. The common Reviews, before the appearance of the Edinburgh, had become extremely mawkish; and, unless when prompted by the malice of the bookseller or reviewer, gave a dawdling, maudlin sort of applause to every thing that reached even mediocrity. The Edinburgh folks squeezed into their sauce plenty of acid, and were popular from novelty as well as from merit. The minor Reviews and other periodical publications, have *outrèd* the matter still farther, and given us all abuse, and no talent. But by the time the language of vituperative criticism becomes general, (which is now pretty nearly the case,) it affects the tympanum of the public ear no more than rogue or rascal from the cage of a parrot, or blood-and-wounds from a horse-barrack. This, therefore, we have to trust to, that decent, lively, and reflecting criticism, teaching men not to abuse books only, but to read and to judge them, will have the effect of novelty upon a public wearied with universal efforts at blackguard and indiscriminating satire. I have a long and very sensible letter from John Murray the bookseller, in which

he touches upon this point very neatly. By the by, little Weber may be very useful upon antiquarian subjects, in the way of collecting information and making remarks; only, you or I must rewrite his lucubrations. I use him often as a pair of eyes in consulting books and collating, and as a pair of hands in making extracts. Constable, the great Edinburgh editor, has offended me excessively by tyrannizing over this poor Teutcher, and being rather rude when I interfered. It is a chance but I may teach him that he should not kick down the scaffolding before his house is quite built. Another bomb is about to break on him besides the Review. This is an Edinburgh Annual Register, to be conducted under the auspices of James Ballantyne, who is himself no despicable composer, and has secured excellent assistance. I cannot help him, of course, very far, but I will certainly lend him a lift as an adviser. I want all my friends to befriend this work, and will send you a *prospectus* when it is published. It will be *valde* anti-Foxite. This is a secret for the present.

"For heaven's sake do not fail to hold a meeting as soon as you can. Gifford will be admirable at service, but will require, or I mistake him much, both a spur and a bridle—a spur on account of habits of literary indolence induced by weak health—and a bridle because, having renounced in some degree general society, he cannot be supposed to have the habitual and instinctive feeling enabling him to judge at once and decidedly on the mode of letting his shafts fly down the breeze of popular opinion. But he has worth, wit, learning, and extensive information; is the friend of our friends in power, and can easily correspond with them; is in no danger of having private quarrels fixed on him for public criticism; nor very likely to be embarrassed by being thrown into action in public life alongside of the very people he has reviewed, and probably offended. All this is of the last importance to the discharge of his arduous duty. It would be cruel to add a word to this merciless epistle, excepting love to Mrs. Ellis and all friends. Leyden, by the by, is triumphant at Calcutta—a *Judge*, of all things!—and making money! He has flourished like a green bay tree under the auspices of Lord Minto, his countryman. Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

Among others whom Scott endeavored to enlist in the service of the new Review was his brother Thomas, who, on the breaking up of his affairs in Edinburgh, had retired to the Isle of Man, and who shortly afterwards obtained the office in which he died, that of paymaster to the 70th regiment. The poet had a high opinion of his brother's literary talents, and thought that his knowledge of our

ancient dramatists, and his vein of comic narration, might render him a very useful recruit. He thus communicates his views to Thomas Scott, on the 19th November, and, as might be expected, the communication is fuller and franker than any other on the subject.

"*To Thomas Scott, Esq., Douglas, Isle of Man.*

"Dear Tom,

"Owing to certain pressing business I have not yet had time to complete my collection of Shadwell * for you, though it is now nearly ready.—I wish you to have all the originals to collate with the edition in 8vo. But I have a more pressing employment for your pen, and to which I think it particularly suited. You are to be informed, but under the seal of the strictest secrecy, that a plot has been long hatching by the gentlemen who were active in the Anti-jacobin paper, to countermine the Edinburgh Review, by establishing one which should display similar talent and independence with a better strain of politics. The management of this work was much pressed upon me;† but though great prospects of emolument were held out, I declined so arduous a task, and it has devolved upon Mr. Gifford, author of the Baviad, with whose wit and learning you are well acquainted. He made it a stipulation, however, that I should give all the assistance in my power, especially at the commencement; to which I am, for many reasons, nothing loath. Now, as I know no one who possesses more power of humor or perception of the ridiculous than yourself, I think your leisure hours might be most pleasantly passed in this way. Novels, light poetry, and quizzical books of all kinds, might be sent you by the packet; you glide back your reviews in the same way, and touch, upon the publication of the number, (quarterly,) ten guineas per printed sheet of sixteen pages. If you are shy of communicating directly with Gifford, you may, for some time at least, send your communications through me, and I will revise them. We want the matter to be a *profound secret* till the first number is out. If you agree to try your skill, I will send you a novel or two. You must understand, as Gadshill tells the Chamberlain, that you are to be leagued with 'Trojans that thou dreamest not of, the which, for sport-sake, are content to do the

* Mr. T. Scott had meditated an edition of Shadwell's plays,—which, by the way, his brother considered as by no means meriting the utter neglect into which they had fallen chiefly in consequence of Dryden's satire.

† This circumstance was not revealed to Mr. Murray. I presume, therefore, the invitation to Scott must have proceeded from Mr. Canning.

profession some grace;' and thus far I assure you that, if by paying attention to your style and subject, you can distinguish yourself creditably, it may prove a means of finding you powerful friends, were any thing opening in your island. Constable, or rather that Bear his partner, has behaved to me of late not very civilly, and I owe Jeffrey a flap with a fox-tail on account of his review of Marmion, and thus doth the whirligig of time bring about my revenges. The late articles on Spain have given general disgust, and many have given up the Edinburgh Review on account of them.

"My mother holds out very well, and talks of writing by this packet. Her cask of herrings, as well as ours, red and white, have arrived safe, and prove most excellent. We have been both dining and supping upon them with great gusto, and are much obliged by your kindness in remembering us. Yours affectionately,

W. S."

I suspect, notwithstanding the opinion to the contrary expressed in the following extract, that the preparations for the new journal did not long escape the notice of either the editor or the publishers of the Edinburgh Review. On receiving the celebrated *Declaration of Westminster* on the subject of the Spanish war, which bears date the 15th December, 1808, Scott says to Ellis:—

"I cannot help writing a few lines to congratulate you on the royal declaration. I suspect by this time the author is at Claremont,* for, if I mistake not egregiously, this spirited composition, as we say in Scotland, fathers itself in the manliness of its style. It has appeared, too, at a most fortunate time, when neither friend nor foe can impute it to temporary motives. Tell Mr. Canning that the old women of Scotland will defend the country with their distaffs, rather than that troops enough be not sent to make good so noble a pledge. Were the thousands that have mouldered away in petty conquests or Liliputian expeditions united to those we have now in that country, what a band would Moore have under him!..... Jeffrey has offered terms of pacification, engaging that no party politics should again appear in his Review. I told him I thought it was now too late, and reminded him that I had often pointed out to him the consequences of letting his work become a party tool. He said 'he did not care for the consequences

* Scott's friend had mentioned that he expected a visit from Mr Canning, at Claremont, in Surrey; which beautiful seat continued in the possession of the Ellis family, until it was purchased by the crown, on the marriage of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, in 1816.

—there were but four men he feared as opponents.'—'Who were these?'—'Yourself for one.'—'Certainly you pay me a great compliment; depend upon it I will endeavor to deserve it.'—'Why, you would not join against me?'—'Yes I would, if I saw a proper opportunity; not against you personally, but against your politics.'—'You are privileged to be violent.'—'I don't ask any privilege for undue violence. But who are your other foemen?'—'George Ellis and Southey.' The fourth he did not name. All this was in great good-humor; and next day I had a very affecting note from him, in answer to an invitation to dinner. He has no suspicion of the Review whatever; but I thought I could not handsomely suffer him to infer that I would be influenced by those private feelings respecting *him*, which, on more than one occasion, he has laid aside when I was personally concerned."

As to Messrs. Constable and Co., it is not to be supposed that the rumors of the rival journal would tend to soothe those disagreeable feelings between them and Scott, of which I can trace the existence several months beyond the date of Mr. Murray's arrival at Ashestiel. Something seems to have occurred before the end of 1808 which induced Scott to suspect that among other sources of uneasiness had been a repentant grudge in the minds of those booksellers as to their bargain about the new edition of Swift; and on the second of January, 1809, I find him requesting, that if, on reflection, they thought they had hastily committed themselves, the deed might be forthwith cancelled. On the 11th of the same month, Messrs. Constable reply as follows:—

"*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

"Sir,

"We are anxious to assure you that we feel no dissatisfaction at any part of our bargain about Swift. Viewing it as a safe and respectable speculation, we should be very sorry to agree to your relinquishing the undertaking, and indeed rely with confidence on its proceeding as originally arranged. We regret that you have not been more willing to overlook the unguarded expression of our Mr. Hunter about which you complain. We are very much concerned that any circumstance should have occurred that should thus interrupt our friendly intercourse; but as we are not willing to believe that we have done any thing which should prevent our being again friends, we may at least be permitted to express a hope that matters may hereafter be restored to their old footing between us, when the misrepresentations of interested persons

may cease to be remembered. At any rate, you will always find us, what we trust to have ever been, sir, your faithful servants,

A. Constable & Co."

Scott answers:—

"*To Messrs. Constable and Co.*

"Edinburgh, 12th January, 1809.

"Gentlemen,

"To resume, for the last time, the disagreeable subject of our difference, I must remind you of what I told Mr. Constable personally, that no *single unguarded expression*, much less the misrepresentation of any person whatever, would have influenced me to quarrel with any of my friends. But if Mr. Hunter will take the trouble to recollect the general opinion he has expressed of my undertakings, and of my ability to execute them, upon many occasions during the last five months, and his whole conduct in the bargain about Swift, I think he ought to be the last to wish his interest compromised on my account. I am only happy the breach has taken place before there was any real loss to complain of, for although I have had my share of popularity, I cannot expect it to be more lasting than that of those who have lost it after deserving it much better.

"In the present circumstances, I have only a parting favor to request of your house, which is, that the portrait for which I sat at Raeburn shall be considered as done at my debit, and for myself. It shall be of course forthcoming for the fulfilment of any engagement you may have made about engraving, if such exists. Sadler will now be soon out, when we will have a settlement of our accounts. I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

Walter Scott."

Mr. Constable declined, in very handsome terms, to give up the picture. But for the present the breach was complete. Among other negotiations which Scott had patronized twelve months before, was one concerning the publication of Miss Seward's poems. On the 19th of March, 1809, he writes as follows to that lady:—

"Constable, like many other folks who learn to undervalue the means by which they have risen, has behaved, or rather suffered his partner to behave, very uncivilly towards me. But they may both live to know that they should not have kicked down the ladder till they were sure of their footing. The very last time I spoke to him on business was about your poems, which he promised faithfully to write about. I understood him to decline your terms, in which I think he acted wrong; but I had neither influence to

change his opinion, nor inclination to interfere with his resolution. He is a very enterprising, and, I believe, a thoroughly honest man, but his vanity in some cases overpowers his discretion."

One word as to the harsh language in which Constable's then partner is mentioned in several of the preceding letters. This Mr. Hunter was, I am told by friends of mine who knew him well, a man of considerable intelligence and accomplishments, to whose personal connections and weight in society the house of Constable and Co. owed a great accession of business and influence. He was, however, a very keen politician; regarded Scott's Toryism with a fixed bitterness; and, moreover, could never conceal his impression that Scott ought to have embarked in no other literary undertakings whatever, until he had completed his edition of Swift. It is not wonderful that, not having been bred regularly to the bookselling business, he should have somewhat misapprehended the obligation which Scott had incurred when the bargain for that work was made; and his feeling of his own station and consequence was no doubt such as to give his style of conversation on doubtful questions of business, a tone for which Scott had not been prepared by his previous intercourse with Mr. Constable. The defection of the poet was, however, at once regretted and resented by both these partners; and Constable, I am told, often vented his wrath in figures as lofty as Scott's own. "Ay," he would say, stamping on the ground with a savage smile, "Ay, there is such a thing as rearing the oak until it can support itself."

All this leads us to the second stage, one still more unwise and unfortunate than the first, in the history of Scott's commercial connection with the Ballantynes. The scheme of starting a new bookselling house in Edinburgh, begun in the shortsighted heat of pique, had now been matured;—I cannot add, either with composed observation or rational forecast—for it was ultimately settled that the ostensible and chief managing partner should be a person without capital, and neither by training nor by temper in the smallest degree qualified for such a situation; more especially where the field was to be taken against long experience, consum-

mate skill, and resources which, if not so large as all the world supposed them, were still in comparison vast, and admirably organized. The rash resolution was, however, carried into effect, and a deed deposited, for secrecy's sake, in the hands of Scott, bound him as one-third partner, James Ballantyne having also a share, in this firm of John Ballantyne and Co., booksellers, Edinburgh.—"*Ringdumfunnidos*" was installed in Hanover Street as the avowed rival of "The Crafty."

The existing bond of copartnership is dated in July, 1809; but I suspect this had been a revised edition. It is certain that the new house were openly mustering their forces some weeks before Scott desired to withdraw his Swift from the hands of the old one in January. This appears from several of the letters that passed between him and Ellis while Gifford was arranging the materials for the first number of the Quarterly Review, and also between him and his friend Southey, to whom, perhaps, more than any other single writer, that journal owed its ultimate success.

To Ellis, for example, he says, on the 13th December, 1808—

"Now let me call your earnest attention to another literary undertaking, which is, in fact, a subsidiary branch of the same grand plan. I transmit the *prospectus* of an Edinburgh Annual Register. I have many reasons for favoring this work as much as I possibly can. In the first place, there is nothing even barely tolerable of this nature, though so obviously necessary to future history. Secondly, Constable was on the point of arranging one on the footing of the Edinburgh Review, and subsidiary thereunto—a plan which has been totally disconcerted by our occupying the vantage-ground. Thirdly, this work will be very well managed. The two Mackenzies,* William Erskine, *cum plurimis aliis*, are engaged in the literary department, and that of science is conducted by Professor Leslie, a great philosopher, and as abominable an animal as I ever saw. He writes, however, with great eloquence, and is an enthusiast in mathematical, chemical, and mineralogical pursuits. I hope to draw upon you in this matter, particularly in the historical department, to which your critical labors will naturally turn your attention. You will ask what I propose to do myself. In fact,

* The Man of Feeling, and Colin Mackenzie of Portmore.

though something will be expected, I cannot propose to be very active, unless the Swift is abandoned, of which I think there is some prospect, as I have reason to complain of very indifferent usage, not indeed from Constable, who is reduced to utter despair by the circumstance, but from the stupid impertinence of his partner, a sort of Whig run mad. I have some reason to believe that Ballantyne, whose stock is now immensely increased, and who is likely to enlarge it by marriage, will commence publisher. Constable threatened him with withdrawing his business from him as a printer, on account of his being a Constitutionalist. He will probably by this false step establish a formidable rival in his own line of publishing, which will be most just retribution. I intend to fortify Ballantyne by promising him my continued friendship, which I hope may be of material service to him. He is much liked by the literary people here; has a liberal spirit, and understanding business very completely, with a good general idea of literature, I think he stands fair for success.

"But, Oh! Ellis, these cursed, double cursed news have sunk my spirits so much, that I am almost at disbelieving a Providence. God forgive me! But I think some evil demon has been permitted, in the shape of this tyrannical monster whom God has sent on the nations visited in his anger. I am confident he is proof against lead and steel, and have only hopes that he may be shot with a silver bullet,* or drowned in the torrents of blood which he delights to shed. Oh! for True Thomas and Lord Soulis's caldron.† Adieu, my dear Ellis. God bless you!—I have been this three days writing this by snatches."

The "cursed news" here alluded to were those of Napoleon's advance by Somosierra, after the dispersion of the armies of Blake and Castaños. On the 23d of the same month, when the Treason of Morla and the fall of Madrid were known in Edinburgh, he thus resumes:—(Probably

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* See note, "Proof against shot given by Satan."—*Waverley Novels*, vol. x. p. 40.

† "On a circle of stones they placed the pot,
On a circle of stones but barely nine;
They heated it red and fiery hot,
Till the burnished glass did glimmer and shine.
They rolled him up in a sheet of lead,
A sheet of lead for a funeral pall.
They plunged him in the caldron red,
And melted him, lead, and bones, and all."

See the Ballad of *Lord Soulis*, and notes. *Border Minstrelsy*, vol. iv. pp. 235–266.

while he wrote, some cause with which he was not concerned was occupying the Court of Session :)—

"Dear Ellis,—I have nothing better to do but to vent my groans. I cannot but feel exceedingly low. I distrust what we call thoroughbred soldiers terribly, when any thing like the formation of extensive plans, of the daring and critical nature which seems necessary for the emancipation of Spain, is required from them. Our army is a poor school for genius—for the qualities which naturally and deservedly attract the applause of our generals, are necessarily exercised upon a small scale. I would to God Wellesley were now at the head of the English in Spain. His late examination shows his acute and decisive talents for command ;* and although I believe in my conscience, that when he found himself superseded, he suffered the pigs to run through the business, when he might in some measure have prevented them—

> 'Yet give the haughty devil his due ;
> Though bold his quarterings, they are true.'

Such a man, with an army of 40,000 or 50,000 British, with the remains of the Gallician army, and the additional forces which every village would furnish in case of success, might possess himself of Burgos, open a communication with Arragon, and even Navarre, and place Buonaparte in the precarious situation of a general with 100,000 enemies between him and his supplies ;—for I presume neither Castaños nor Palafox are so broken as to be altogether disembodied. But a general who is always looking over his shoulder, and more intent on saving his own army than on doing the service on which he is sent, will hardly, I fear, be found capable of forming or executing a plan which its very daring character might render successful. What would we think of an admiral who should bring back his fleet and tell us old Keppel's story of a lee-shore, and the risk of his Majesty's vessels? Our sailors have learned that his Majesty's ships were built to be stranded, or burnt, or sunk, or at least to encounter the risk of these contingencies, when his service requires it ; and I heartily wish our generals would learn to play for the gammon, and not to sit down contented with a mere saving game. What, however, can we say of Moore, or how judge of his actions, since the Supreme Junta have shown themselves so miserably incapable of the

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* This refers to Sir Arthur Wellesley's evidence before the Court of Inquiry into the circumstances which led to the Convention (miscalled) of Cintra. For the best answer to the then popular suspicion, which Scott seems to have partaken, as to the conduct of Sir Arthur when superseded in the moment of victory at Vimiero, I refer to the contemporary despatches lately published in Colonel Gurwood's invaluable compilation.

arduous exertions expected from them? Yet, like Pistol, they spoke bold words at the bridge too, and I admired their firmness in declaring O'Farrel, and the rest of the Frenchified Spaniards, traitors. But they may have Roman pride, and want Roman talent to support it; and in short, unless God Almighty should raise among them one of those extraordinary geniuses who seem to be created for the emergencies of an oppressed people, I confess I still incline to despondence. If Canning could send a portion of his own spirit with the generals he sends forth, my hope would be high indeed. The proclamation was truly gallant.

"As to the Annual Register, I do agree that the Prospectus is in too stately a tone—yet I question if a purer piece of composition would have attracted the necessary attention. We must sound a trumpet before we open a show. You will say we have added a tambourine; but the mob will the more readily stop and gaze; nor would their ears be so much struck by a sonta from Viotti. Do you know the Review begins to get wind here? An Edinburgh bookseller asked me to recommend him for the sale here, and said he heard it confidentially from London.—Ever yours,

W. S."

I may also introduce here a letter of about the same date, and referring chiefly to the same subjects, addressed by Scott to his friend, Mr. Charles Sharpe,* then at Oxford. The allusion at the beginning is to a drawing of Queen Elizabeth, as seen "dancing high and disposedly," in her private chamber, by the Scotch ambassador, Sir James Melville, whose description of the exhibition is one of the most amusing things in his Memoirs. This production of Mr. Sharpe's pencil, and the delight with which Scott used to expatiate on its merits, must be well remembered by every one that ever visited the poet at Abbotsford.—Some of the names mentioned in this letter as counted on by the projectors of the Quarterly Review will, no doubt, amuse the reader.

"*To Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq., Christ Church, Oxford.*

"Edinburgh, 30th December, 1808.

"My dear Sharpe,

"The inimitable virago came safe, and was welcomed by the inextinguishable laughter of all who looked upon her caprioles. I

* Scott's acquaintance with Mr. Sharpe began when the latter was very young. He supplied Scott when compiling the Minstrelsy with the ballad of the "Tower of Repentance," &c. See vol. iv. pp. 307–323.

was unfortunately out of town for a few days, which prevented me from acknowledging instantly what gave me so much pleasure, both on account of its intrinsic value, and as a mark of your kind remembrance. You have, I assure you, been upmost in my thoughts for some time past, as I have a serious design on your literary talents, which I am very anxious to engage in one or both of the two following schemes. *Imprimis*, it has been long the decided resolution of Mr. Canning and some of his literary friends, particularly Geo. Ellis, Malthus, Frere, W. Rose, &c., that something of an independent Review ought to be started in London. This plan is now on the point of being executed, after much consultation. I have strongly advised that politics be avoided, unless in cases of great national import, and that their tone be then moderate and manly; but the general tone of the publication is to be literary. William Gifford is editor, and I have promised to endeavor to recruit for him a few spirited young men able and willing to assist in such an undertaking. I confess you were chiefly in my thoughts when I made this promise; but it is a subject which for a thousand reasons I would rather have talked over than written about—among others more prominent, I may reckon my great abhorrence of pen and ink, for writing has been so long a matter of duty with me, that it is become as utterly abominable to me as matters of duty usually are. Let me entreat you, therefore, to lay hold of Macneill,* or any other new book you like, and give us a good hacking review of it. I retain so much the old habit of a barrister, that I cannot help adding, the fee is ten guineas a sheet, which may serve to buy an odd book now and then—as good play for nothing, you know, as work for nothing; but besides this, your exertions in this cause, if you shall choose to make any, will make you more intimately acquainted with a very pleasant literary coterie than introductions of a more formal kind; and if you happen to know George Ellis already, you must, I am sure, be pleased to take any trouble likely to produce an intimacy between you. The Hebers are also engaged, *item* Rogers, Southey, Moore, (Anacreon,) and others whose reputations Jeffrey has murdered, and who are rising to cry woe upon him, like the ghosts in King Richard; for your acute and perspicacious judgment must ere this have led you to suspect that this same new Review, which by the way is to be called 'the Quarterly,' is intended as a rival to the Edinburgh; and if it contains criticism not very inferior in point of talent, with the same independence on booksellers' influence, (which has ruined all the English Reviews,) I do not see why it should not divide with it the public favor. Observe carefully this plan is altogether distinct from one which has been proposed by the veteran Cumberland, to which is annexed the extraordinary proposal that each contributor

* "The Pastoral, or Lyric Muse of Scotland; in three Cantos," 4to. by Hector Macneill, appeared in Dec. 1808.

shall place his name before his article—a stipulation which must prove fatal to the undertaking. If I did not think this likely to be a very well managed business, I would not recommend it to your consideration; but you see I am engaged with no 'fool land rakers, no long staff sixpenny strikers, but with nobility and tranquillity, burgomasters, and great oneyers,' and so forth.

"The other plan refers to the enclosed prospectus, and has long been a favorite scheme of mine, of William Erskine's, and some of my other cronies here. Mr. Ballantyne, the editor, only undertakes for the inferior departments of the work, and for keeping the whole matter in train. We are most anxious to have respectable contributors, and the smallest donation in any department, poetry, antiquities, &c. &c., will be most thankfully accepted and registered. But the historical department is that in which I would chiefly wish to see you engaged. A lively, luminous picture of the events of the last momentous year, is a task for the pen of a man of genius; as for materials, I could procure you access to many of a valuable kind. The appointments of our historian are £300 a-year—no deaf nuts. Another person* has been proposed, and written to, but I cannot any longer delay submitting the thing to your consideration. Of course, you are to rely on every assistance that can be afforded by your humble comdumble, as Swift says. I hope the great man will give us his answer shortly—and if his be negative, pray let yours be positive. Our politics we would wish to be constitutional, but not party. You see, my good friend, what it is to show your good parts before unquestionable judges.

"I am forced to conclude abruptly. Thine entirely,

W. Scott."

Mr. Morritt was by this time beginning to correspond with the poet pretty frequently. The first of their letters, however, that serves to throw light on Scott's personal proceedings, is the following:—

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby Park, Yorkshire.*

"Edinburgh, 14th January, 1809.

"My dear Sir,

"For a long while I thought my summons to London would have been immediate, and that I should have had the pleasure to wait upon you at Rokeby Park in my way to town. But, after due consideration, the commissioners on our Scottish reform of judicial proceedings resolved to begin their sittings at Edinburgh, and have been in full activity ever since last St. Andrew's day. You are not ignorant that, in business of this nature, very much of the de-

* Mr. Southey—who finally undertook the task proposed to him.

tail, and of preparing the materials for the various meetings, necessarily devolves upon the clerk, and I cannot say but that my time has been fully occupied.

"Meanwhile, however, I have been concocting, at the instigation of various loyal and well-disposed persons, a grand scheme of opposition to the proud critics of Edinburgh. It is now matured in all its branches, and consists of the following divisions. A new review in London, to be called the Quarterly, William Gifford to be the editor; George Ellis, Rose, Mr. Canning if possible, Frere, and all the ancient Anti-Jacobins to be concerned. The first number is now in hand, and the allies, I hope and trust, securely united to each other. I have promised to get them such assistance as I can, and most happy should I be to prevail upon you to put your hand to the ark. You can so easily run off an article either of learning or of fun, that it would be inexcusable not to afford us your assistance. Then, sir, to turn the flank of Messrs. Constable and Co., and to avenge myself of certain impertinences which, in the vehemence of their Whiggery, they have dared to indulge in towards me, I have prepared to start against them at Whitsunday first the celebrated printer Ballantyne, (who had the honor of meeting you at Ashestiel,) in the shape of an Edinburgh publisher, with a long purse and a sound political creed, not to mention an alliance, offensive and defensive, with young John Murray of Fleet Street, the most enlightened and active of the London trade. By this means I hope to counterbalance the predominating influence of Constable and Co., who at present have it in their power and inclination to forward or suppress any book, as they approve or dislike its political tendency. Lastly, I have caused the said Ballantyne to venture upon an Edinburgh Annual Register, of which I send you a prospectus. I intend to help him myself as far as time will admit, and hope to procure him many respectable coadjutors.

"My own motions southwards remain undetermined, but I conceive I may get to town about the beginning of March, when I expect to find you *en famille* in Portland Place. Our Heber will then most likely be in town, and altogether I am much better pleased that the journey is put off till the lively season of gayety.

"I am busy with my edition of Swift, and treasure your kind hints for my direction as I advance. In summer I think of going to Ireland to pick up any thing that may be yet recoverable of the Dean of St. Patrick's. Mrs. Scott joins me in kindest and best respects to Mrs. Morritt. I am, with great regard, dear sir, your faithful, humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

The two following letters seem to have been written at the *clerk's table*, the first shortly before, and the sec-

ond very soon after, the news of the battle of Corunna reached Scotland:—

"*To Robert Southey, Esq., Keswick.*

"Edinburgh, 14th January, 1809.

"Dear Southey,

"I have been some time from home in the course of the holidays, but immediately on my return set about procuring the books you wished to see. There are only three of them in our library, namely—

Dobrizzhoffer de Abiponibus, 3 vols.

A French translation of Gomella's History of Oronoquo.

Ramuzio Navigazioni, &c., &c.

Of these I can only lay my hands immediately on Dobrizzhoffer, which I have sent off by the Carlisle coach, addressed to the care of Jollie, the bookseller, for you. I do this at my own risk, because we never grant license to send the books out of Scotland; and should I be found to have done so, I may be censured, and perhaps my use of the library suspended. At the same time, I think it hard you should take a journey in this deadly cold weather, and trust you will make early inquiry after the book. Keep it out of sight while you use it, and return it as soon as you have finished. I suppose these same Abipones were a nation to my own heart's content, being, as the title-page informs me, *bellicosi et equestres*, like our old Border lads. Should you think of coming hither, which perhaps might be the means of procuring you more information than I can make you aware of, I bespeak you for my guest. I can give you a little chamber in the wall, and you shall go out and in as quietly and freely as your heart can desire, without a human creature saying 'Why doest thou so?' Thalaba is in parturition, too, and you should, in decent curiosity, give an eye after him. Yet I will endeavor to recover the other books, (now lent out,) and send them to you in the same way as Dob. travels, unless you recommend another conveyance. But I expect this generosity on my part will rather stir your gallantry to make us a visit when this abominable storm has passed away. My present occupation is highly unpoetical—clouting, in short, and cobbling our old Scottish system of jurisprudence, with a view to reform. I am clerk to a commission under the authority of Parliament for this purpose, which keeps me more than busy enough.

"I have had a high quarrel with Constable and Co. The Edinburgh Review has driven them quite crazy, and its success led them to undervalue those who have been of most use to them—but they shall dearly abye it. The worst is that, being out of a publishing house, I have not interest to be of any service to Coleridge's intended paper.* Ballantyne, the printer, intends to open

* Mr. Coleridge's "Friend" was originally published in weekly papers.

shop here on the part of his brother, and I am sure will do all he can to favor the work. Does it positively go on?

"I have read Wordsworth's lucubrations in the Courier,* and much agree with him. Alas! we want every thing but courage and virtue in this desperate contest. Skill, knowledge of mankind, ineffable unhesitating villany, combination of movement and combination of means, are with our adversary. We can only fight like mastiffs, boldly, blindly, and faithfully. I am almost driven to the pass of the Covenanters, when they told the Almighty in their prayers, he should no longer be their God; and I really believe a few Gazettes more will make me turn Turk or Infidel. Believe me, in great grief of spirit, dear Southey, ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

"Mrs. Scott begs kind remembrance to Mrs. Southey. The bed in the said chamber in the wall is a double one."

To the Same.

"Edinburgh, 31st January, 1809.

"My dear Southey,

"Yesterday I received your letter, and to-day I despatched Gomella and the third volume of Ramuzio. The other two volumes can also be sent, if you should find it necessary to consult them. The parcel is addressed to the paternal charge of your Keswick carrier. There is no hurry in returning these volumes; so don't derange your operations by hurrying your extracts—only keep them from any profane eye. I dipped into Gomella while I was waiting for intelligence from you, and was much edified by the *bonhommie* with which the miracles of the Jesuits are introduced.

"The news from Spain gave me such a mingled feeling, that I never suffered so much in my whole life from the disorder of spirits occasioned by affecting intelligence. My mind has naturally a strong military bent, though my path in life has been so very different. I love a drum and a soldier as heartily as ever Uncle Toby did; and, between the pride arising from our gallant bearing, and the deep regret that so much bravery should run to waste, I spent a most disordered and agitated night, never closing my eyes but what I was harassed with visions of broken ranks, bleeding soldiers, dying horses—'and all the current of a heady fight.' I agree with you that we want energy in our cabinet—or rather their opinions are so different, that they come to wretched compositions between them, which are worse than the worst course decidedly followed out. Canning is most anxious to support the Spaniards, and would have had a second army at Corunna, but for the positive demand of poor General Moore that empty transports should be sent thither. So the reënforcements

* Mr. Wordsworth's Remarks on the Convention of Cintra were afterwards collected in a pamphlet.

were disembarked. I fear it will be found that Moore was rather an excellent officer than a general of those comprehensive and daring views necessary in his dangerous situation. Had Wellesley been there, the battle of Corunna would have been fought and won at Somosierra, and the ranks of the victors would have been reënforced by the population of Madrid. Would to God we had yet 100,000 men in Spain. I fear not Buonaparte's tactics. The art of fence may do a great deal, but '*a la stoccata*,' as Mercutio says, cannot carry it away from national valor and personal strength. The Opposition have sold or bartered every feeling of patriotism for the most greedy and selfish *egoisme*.

"Ballantyne's brother is setting up here as a bookseller, chiefly for publishing. I will recommend Coleridge's paper to him as strongly as I can. I hope by the time it is commenced he will be enabled to send him a handsome order. From my great regard for his brother, I shall give this young publisher what assistance I can. He is understood to start against Constable and the Reviewers, and publishes the Quarterly. Indeed he is in strict alliance, offensive and defensive, with John Murray of Fleet Street. I have also been laboring a little for the said Quarterly, which I believe you will detect. I hear very high things from Gifford of your article. About your visit to Edinburgh, I hope it will be a month later than you now propose, because my present prospects lead me to think I must be in London the whole month of April. Early in May I must return, and will willingly take the lakes in my way, in hopes you will accompany me to Edinburgh, which you positively must not think of visiting in my absence.

"Lord Advocate, who is sitting behind me, says the Ministers have resolved not to abandon the Spaniards *coute qui coute*. It is a spirited determination—but they must find a general who has, as the Turks say, *le Diable au corps*, and who, instead of standing staring to see what they mean to do, will teach them to dread those surprises and desperate enterprises by which they have been so often successful. Believe me, dear Southey, yours affectionately,

WALTER SCOTT.

"Mrs. Scott joins me in best compliments to Mrs. Southey. I hope she will have a happy hour. Pray, write me word when the books come safe. What is Wordsworth doing, and where the devil is his Doe? I am not sure if he will thank me for proving that all the Nortons escaped to Flanders, one excepted. I never knew a popular tradition so totally groundless as that respecting their execution at York."

CHAPTER VIII.

CASE OF A POETICAL TAILOR CONDEMNED TO DEATH AT EDINBURGH — HIS LETTERS TO SCOTT — DEATH OF CAMP — SCOTT IN LONDON — MR. MORRITT'S DESCRIPTION OF HIM AS "A LION" IN TOWN — DINNER AT MR. SOTHEBY'S — COLERIDGE'S FIRE, FAMINE, AND SLAUGHTER — THE QUARTERLY REVIEW STARTED — FIRST VISIT TO ROKEBY — THE LADY OF THE LAKE BEGUN — EXCURSION TO THE TROSSACHS AND LOCH LOMOND — LETTER ON BYRON'S ENGLISH BARDS AND SCOTCH REVIEWERS — DEATH OF DANIEL SCOTT — CORRESPONDENCE ABOUT MR. CANNING'S DUEL WITH LORD CASTLEREAGH — MISS BAILLIE'S FAMILY LEGEND ACTED AT EDINBURGH — THEATRICAL ANECDOTES — KEMBLE — SIDDONS — TERRY — LETTER ON THE DEATH OF MISS SEWARD — 1809–1810.

In the end of 1808, a young man, by name Andrew Stewart, who had figured for some years before as a poetical contributor to the Scots' Magazine, and inserted there, among other things, a set of stanzas in honor of the Last Minstrel,* was tried, and capitally convicted, on a charge of burglary. He addressed, some weeks after his sentence had been pronounced, the following letters:—

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Castle Street.*

"Edinburgh Tolbooth, 20th January, 1809.

"Sir,

"Although I am a stranger to you, yet I am not to your works, which I have read and admired, and which will continue to be read and admired as long as there remains a taste for true excellence. Previous to committing the crime for which I am now convicted, I composed several poems in the Scottish dialect, which I herewith send for your perusal, and humbly hope you will listen to my tale of misery. I have been a truly unfortunate

* One verse of this production will suffice:

"Sweetest Minstrel that e'er sung
Of valorous deeds by Scotia done,
Whose wild notes warbled in the win',
Delightful strain!
O'er hills and dales, and vales amang,
We've heard again," &c.

follower of the Muses. I was born in Edinburgh, of poor but honest parents. My father is by trade a bookbinder, and my mother dying in 1798, he was left a widower, with five small children, who have all been brought up by his own industry. As soon as I was fit for a trade, he bound me apprentice to a tailor in Edinburgh, but owing to his using me badly, I went to law. The consequence was, I got up my indentures after being only two years in his service. To my father's trade I have to ascribe my first attachment to the Muses. I perused with delight the books that came in the way; and the effusions of the poets of my country I read with rapture. I now formed the resolution of not binding myself to a trade again, as by that means I might get my propensity for reading followed. I acted as clerk to different people, and my character was irreproachable. I determined to settle in life, and for that purpose I married a young woman I formed a strong attachment to. Being out of employment these last nine months, I suffered all the hardships of want, and saw

> 'Poverty with empty hand,
> And eager look, half-naked stand.'—*Fergusson.*

Reduced to this miserable situation, with my wife almost starving, and having no friends to render me the smallest assistance, I resided in a furnished room till I was unable to pay the rent, and then I was literally turned out of doors, like poor Dermody, in poverty and rags. Having no kind hand stretched out to help me, I associated with company of very loose manners, till then strangers to me, and by them I was led to commit the crime I am condemned to suffer for. But my mind is so agitated, I can scarce narrate my tale of misery. My age is only twenty-three, and, to all appearance, will be cut off in the prime. I was tried along with my brother, Robert Stewart, and John M'Intyre, for breaking into the workshop of Peter More, calico-glazer, Edinburgh, and received the dreadful sentence to be executed on the 22d of February next. We have no friends to apply to for Royal Mercy. If I had any kind friend to mention my case to my Lord Justice-Clerk, perhaps I might get my sentence mitigated. You will see my poems are of the humorous cast. Alas! it is now the contrary. I remain your unfortunate humble servant,

ANDREW STEWART."

To the same.

"Tolbooth, Sunday.

"Sir,

"I received your kind letter last night, enclosing one pound sterling, for which I have only to request you will accept the return of a grateful heart. My prayers, while on earth, will be always for your welfare. Your letter came like a ministering angel to me. The idea of my approaching end darts across my

brain; and, as our immortal bard, Shakspeare, says, 'harrows up my soul.' Some time since, when chance threw in my way Sir William Forbes's Life of Beattie, the account of the closing scene of Principal Campbell, as therein mentioned, made a deep impression on my mind. 'At a time,' says he, 'when Campbell was just expiring, and had told his wife and niece so, a cordial happened unexpectedly to give some relief. As soon as he was able to speak, he said, he wondered to see their faces so melancholy and covered with tears at the apprehension of his departure. '*At that instant*,' said he, '*I felt my mind in such a state in the thoughts of my immediate dissolution, that I can express my feelings in no other way than by saying I was in a rapture.*' There is something awfully satisfactory in the above.

"I have to mention, as a dying man, that it was not the greed of money that made me commit the crime, but the extreme pressure of poverty and want.

"How silent seems all!—not a whisper is heard,
Save the guardians of night when they bawl;
How dreary and wild appears all around!
No pitying voice near my call.

"O life, what are all thy gay pleasures and cares,
When deprived of sweet liberty's smile?
Not hope in all thy gay charms arrayed,
Can one heavy hour now beguile.

"How sad is the poor convict's sorrowful lot,—
Condemned in these walls to remain,
When torn from those nearest his heart,
Perhaps ne'er to view them again!

"The beauties of morning now burst on my view,
Remembrance of scenes that are past,
When contentment sat smiling, and happy my lot,—
Scenes, alas! formed not for to last.

"Now fled are the hours I delighted to roam
Scotia's hills, dales, and valleys among,
And with rapture would list to the songs of her bards,
And love's tale as it flowed from the tongue.

"Nought but death now awaits me; how dread, but true!
How ghastly its form does appear!
Soon silent the muse that delighted to view
And sing of the sweets of the year.

"You are the first gentleman I ever sent my poems to, and I never corrected any of them, my mind has been in such a state. I remain, sir, your grateful unfortunate servant,

ANDREW STEWART."

It appears that Scott and his good-natured old friend, Mr. Manners the bookseller, who happened at this time to be one of the bailies of Edinburgh, exerted their joint influence in this tailor-poet's behalf, and with such success, that his sentence was commuted for one of transportation for life. A thin octavo pamphlet, entitled "POEMS, chiefly in the Scottish dialect, by Andrew Stewart; printed for the benefit of the Author's Father, and sold by Manners & Miller, and A. Constable & Co., 1809," appeared soon after the convict's departure for Botany Bay. But as to his fortune in that new world, I possess no information. There seemed to me something so striking in the working of his feelings as expressed in his letters to Scott, that I thought the reader would forgive this little episode.

In the course of February, Mr. John Ballantyne had proceeded to London, for the purpose of introducing himself to the chief publishers there in his new capacity, and especially of taking Mr. Murray's instructions respecting the Scotch management of the Quarterly Review. As soon as the spring vacation began, Scott followed him by sea. He might naturally have wished to be at hand while his new partner was forming arrangements on which so much must depend; but some circumstances in the procedure of the Scotch Law Commission had made the Lord Advocate request his presence at this time in town. There he and Mrs. Scott took up their quarters, as usual, under the roof of their kind old friends the Dumergues; while their eldest girl enjoyed the advantage of being domesticated with the Miss Baillies at Hampstead. They staid more than two months, and, this being his first visit to town since his fame had been crowned by Marmion, he was of course more than ever the object of general attention. Mr. Morritt saw much of him, both at his own house in Portland Place and elsewhere, and I transcribe a few sentences from his *memoranda* of the period.

"Scott," his friend says, "more correctly than any other man I ever knew, appreciated the value of that apparently enthusiastic *engouement* which the world of London shows to the fashionable wonder of the year. During the sojourn of 1809, the homage paid

him would have turned the head of any less gifted man of eminence. It neither altered his opinions, nor produced the affectation of despising it; on the contrary, he received it, cultivated it, and repaid it in his own coin. 'All this is very flattering,' he would say, 'and very civil; and if people are amused with hearing me tell a parcel of old stories, or recite a pack of ballads to lovely young girls and gaping matrons, they are easily pleased, and a man would be very ill-natured who would not give pleasure so cheaply conferred.' If he dined with us and found any new faces, 'Well, do you want me to play lion to-day?' was his usual question—'I will roar, if you like it, to your heart's content.' He would, indeed, in such cases, put forth all his inimitable powers of entertainment—and day after day surprised me by their unexpected extent and variety. Then, as the party dwindled, and we were left alone, he laughed at himself, quoted, 'yet know that I one Snug the joiner am—no lion fierce,' &c.—and was at once himself again.

"He often lamented the injurious effects for literature and genius resulting from the influence of London celebrity on weaker minds, especially in the excitement of ambition for this subordinate and ephemeral *reputation du salon.* 'It may be a pleasant gale to sail with,' he said, 'but it never yet led to a port that I should like to anchor in;' nor did he willingly endure, either in London or Edinburgh, the little exclusive circles of literary society, much less their occasional fastidiousness and petty partialities.

"One story which I heard of him from Dr. Howley, now Archbishop of Canterbury, (for I was not present,) was very characteristic. The doctor was one of a grand congregation of lions, where Scott and Coleridge, *cum multis aliis*, attended at Sotheby's. Poets and poetry were the topics of the table, and there was plentiful recitation of effusions as yet unpublished, which of course obtained abundant applause. Coleridge repeated more than one, which, as Dr. H. thought, were eulogized by some of the company with something like affectation, and a desire to humble Scott by raising a poet of inferior reputation on his shoulders. Scott, however, joined in the compliments as cordially as any body, until, in his turn, he was invited to display some of his occasional poetry, much of which he must, no doubt, have written. Scott said he had published so much, he had nothing of his own left that he could think worth their hearing, but he would repeat a little copy of verses which he had shortly before seen in a provincial newspaper, and which seemed to him almost as good as any thing they had been listening to with so much pleasure. He repeated the stanzas now so well known of 'Fire, Famine, and Slaughter.' The applauses that ensued were faint—then came slight criticisms, from which Scott defended the unknown author. At last, a more bitter antagonist opened, and, fastening upon one line, cried, 'This at least is absolute nonsense.' Scott denied the charge—the Zoilus

persisted—until Coleridge, out of all patience, exclaimed, 'For God's sake let Mr. Scott alone—I wrote the poem.' This exposition of the real worth of dinner criticism can hardly be excelled.*

"He often complained of the real dulness of parties where each guest arrived under the implied and tacit obligation of exhibiting some extraordinary powers of talk or wit. 'If,' he said, 'I encounter men of the world, men of business, odd or striking characters of professional excellence in any department, I am in my element, for they cannot lionize me without my returning the compliment and learning something from them.' He was much with George Ellis, Canning, and Croker, and delighted in them,—as indeed who did not?—but he loved to study eminence of every class and sort, and his rising fame gave him easy access to gratify all his curiosity."

The meetings with Canning, Croker, and Ellis, to which Mr. Morritt alludes, were, as may be supposed, chiefly occupied with the affairs of the Quarterly Review. The first number of that Journal appeared while Scott was in London: it contained three articles from his pen—namely, one on the Reliques of Burns; another on the Chronicle of the Cid; and a third on Sir John Carr's Tour through Scotland. His conferences with the editor and publisher were frequent; and the latter certainly contemplated, at this time, a most close and intimate connection with him, not only as a reviewer, but an author; and, consequently, with both the concerns of the Messrs. Ballantyne. Scott continued for some time to be a very active contributor to the Quarterly Review; nor, indeed, was his connection with it ever entirely suspended. But John Ballantyne transacted business in a fashion which soon cooled, and in no

* It may amuse the reader to turn to Mr. Coleridge's own stately account of this lion-show in Grosvenor Street, in the preface to his celebrated Eclogue. There was one person present, it seems, who had been in the secret of its authorship—Sir Humphrey Davy; and no one could have enjoyed the scene more than he must have done. "At the house," Coleridge says, "of a gentleman who, by the principles and corresponding virtues of a sincere Christian, consecrates a cultivated genius and the favorable accidents of birth, opulence, and splendid connections, it was my good fortune to meet, in a dinner party, with more men of celebrity in science or polite literature than are commonly found collected around the same table. In the course of conversation one of the party reminded an illustrious poet," &c. &c.—*Coleridge's Poetical Works.* Edition 1835. Vol. I. p. 274.

very long time dissolved, the general "alliance offensive and defensive" with Murray, which Scott had announced before leaving Edinburgh to both Southey and Ellis.

On his return northwards, he spent a fortnight in Yorkshire with Mr. Morritt; but his correspondence, from which I resume my extracts, will show, among other things, the lively impression made on him by his first view of Rokeby.

The next of these letters reminds me, however, that I should have mentioned sooner the death of Camp, the first of not a few dogs whose names will be "freshly remembered" as long as their master's works are popular. This favorite began to droop early in 1808, and became incapable of accompanying Scott in his rides; but he preserved his affection and sagacity to the last. At Ashestiel, as the servant was laying the cloth for dinner, he would address the dog lying on his mat by the fire, and say, "Camp, my good fellow, the sheriff's coming home by the ford—or by the hill;" and the sick animal would immediately bestir himself to welcome his master, going out at the back door, or the front door, according to the direction given, and advancing as far as he was able, either towards the ford of the Tweed, or the bridge over the Glenkinnon burn beyond Laird Nippy's gate. He died about January, 1809, and was buried in a fine moonlight night, in the little garden behind the house in Castle Street, immediately opposite to the window at which Scott usually sat writing. My wife tells me she remembers the whole family standing in tears about the grave, as her father himself smoothed down the turf above Camp with the saddest expression of face she had ever seen in him. He had been engaged to dine abroad that day, but apologized on account of "the death of a dear old friend;" and Mr. Macdonald Buchanan was not at all surprised that he should have done so, when it came out next morning that Camp was no more.

"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"Edinburgh, July 8, 1809.

"My dear Ellis,

"We reached home about a fortnight ago, having lingered a little while at Rokeby Park, the seat of our friend Morritt, and

one of the most enviable places I have ever seen, as it unites the richness and luxuriance of English vegetation with the romantic variety of glen, torrent, and copse, which dignifies our northern scenery. The Greta and Tees, two most beautiful and rapid rivers, join their currents in the demesne. The banks of the Lees resemble, from the height of the rocks, the glen of Roslin, so much and justly admired. The Greta is the scene of a comic romance,* of which I think I remember giving you the outline. It concerns the history of a 'Felon Sowe,'—

'Which won'd in Rokeby wood,
Ran endlong Greta side,'

bestowed by Ralph of Rokeby on the freres of Richmond, and the misadventures of the holy fathers in their awkward attempts to catch this intractable animal. We had the pleasure to find all our little folks well, and are now on the point of shifting quarters to Ashestiel. I have supplied the vacancy occasioned by the death of poor old Camp with a terrier puppy of the old shaggy Celtic breed. He is of high pedigree, and was procured with great difficulty by the kindness of Miss Dunlop of Dunlop; so I have christened him Wallace, as the donor is a descendant of the Guardian of Scotland. Having given you all this curious and valuable information about my own affairs, let me call your attention to the enclosed, which was in fact the principal cause of my immediately troubling you." * * *

The enclosure, and the rest of the letter, refer to the private affairs of Mr. Southey, in whose favor Scott had for some time back been strenuously using his interest with his friends in the Government. How well he had, while in London, read the feelings of some of those ministers towards each other, appears from various letters written upon his return to Scotland. It may be sufficient to quote part of one addressed to the distinguished author whose fortunes he was exerting himself to promote. To him Scott says (14th June)—

"Mr. Canning's opportunities to serve you will soon be numerous, or they will soon be gone altogether; for he is of a different mould from some of his colleagues, and a decided foe to those half measures which I know you detest as much as I do. It is not his fault that the cause of Spain is not at this moment triumphant. This I know, and the time will come when the world will know it too."

* Scott printed this Ballad in the Notes to his poem of Rokeby.

Before fixing himself at Ashestiel for the autumn, he had undertaken to have a third poem ready for publication, by John Ballantyne, by the end of the year, and probably made some progress in the composition of the Lady of the Lake. On the rising of the Court in July, he went, accompanied by Mrs. Scott and his eldest daughter, to revisit the localities, so dear to him in the days of his juvenile rambling, which he had chosen for the scene of his fable. He gave a week to his old friends at Cambusmore, and ascertained, in his own person, that a good horseman, well mounted, might gallop from the shore of Loch Vennachar to the rock of Stirling within the space allotted for that purpose to Fitz James. From Cambusmore the party proceeded to Ross Priory, and, under the guidance of Mr. Macdonald Buchanan, explored the islands of Loch Lomond, Arrochar, Loch Sloy, and all the scenery of a hundred desperate conflicts between the Macfarlanes, the Colquhouns, and the Clan Alpine. At Buchanan House, which is very near Ross Priory, Scott's friends, Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart, were then visiting the Duke of Montrose; he joined them there, and read to them the Stag Chase, which he had just completed under the full influence of the *genius loci*.

It was on this occasion, at Buchanan House, that he first saw Lord Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." On this subject he says, in his Introduction to Marmion in 1830—

"When Byron wrote his famous satire, I had my share of flagellation among my betters. My crime was having written a poem for a thousand pounds, which was no otherwise true than that I sold the copy-right for that sum. Now, not to mention that an author can hardly be censured for accepting such a sum as the booksellers are willing to give him, especially as the gentlemen of the trade made no complaints of their bargain, I thought the interference with my private affairs was rather beyond the limits of literary satire. I was, moreover, so far from having had any thing to do with the offensive criticism in the Edinburgh, that I had remonstrated with the editor, because I thought the 'Hours of Idleness' treated with undue severity. They were written, like all juvenile poetry, rather from the recollection of what had pleased the author in others, than what had been suggested by his own

imagination; but nevertheless I thought they contained passages of noble promise."

I need hardly transcribe the well-known lines—

> "Next view in state, proud prancing on his roan,
> The golden-crested, haughty Marmion,—"

down to

> "For this we spurn Apollo's venal son,
> And bid a long 'good night to Marmion,'"—

with his lordship's note on the last line—"Good night to Marmion, the pathetic and also prophetic exclamation of Henry Blount, Esquire, on the death of honest Marmion."—But it may entertain my readers to compare the style in which Scott alludes to Byron's assault in the preface of 1830, with that of one of his contemporary letters on the subject. Addressing (August 7, 1809) the gentleman in whose behalf he had been interceding with Mr. Canning, he says—

"By the way, is the ancient ****, whose decease is to open our quest, thinking of a better world? I only ask because, about three years ago, I accepted the office I hold in the Court of Session, the revenue to accrue to me only on the death of the old incumbent. But my friend has since taken out a new lease of life, and, unless I get some Border lad to cut his throat, may, for aught I know, live as long as I shall;—such odious deceivers are these invalids. Mine reminds me of Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea, and will certainly throttle me if I can't somehow dismount him. If I were once in possession of my reversionary income, I would, like you, bid farewell to the drudgery of literature, and do nothing but what I pleased, which might be another phrase for doing very little. I was always an admirer of the modest wish of a retainer in one of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays—

> 'I would not be a serving man
> To carry the cloak-bag still,
> Nor would I be a falconer,
> The greedy hawks to fill;
> But I would live in a good house,
> And have a good master too,
> And I would eat and drink of the best,
> And *no* work would I do.'

In the mean time, it is funny enough to see a whelp of a young Lord Byron abusing me, of whose circumstances he knows nothing, for endeavoring to scratch out a living with my pen. God

help the bear if, having little else to eat, he must not even suck his own paws. I can assure the noble imp of fame it is not my fault that I was not born to a park and £5000 a-year, as it is not his lordship's merit, although it may be his great good fortune, that he was not born to live by his literary talents or success. Adieu, my dear friend. I shall be impatient to hear how your matters fadge."

This gentleman's affairs are again alluded to in a letter to Ellis, dated Ashestiel, September 14 :—

"I do not write to whet a purpose that is not blunted, but to express my anxious wishes that your kind endeavors may succeed while it is called *to-day*, for, by all tokens, it will soon be *yesterday* with this Ministry. And they will deserve it, for crossing, jostling, and hampering the measures of the only man among them fit to be intrusted with the salvation of the country. The spring-tide may, for aught I know, break in this next session of Parliament. There is an evil fate upon us in all we do at home and abroad, else why should the Conqueror of Talavera be retreating from the field of his glory at a moment when, by all reasonable calculation, he should have been the soul and mover of a combined army of 150,000 English, Spaniards, and Portuguese? And why should Gifford employ himself at home in the thriftless exercise of correction, as if Mercury, instead of stretching to a race himself, were to amuse himself with starting a bedrid cripple, and making a pair of crutches for him with his own hand? Much might have been done, and may yet be done; but we are not yet in the right way. Is there no one among you who can throw a Congreve rocket among the gerunds and supines of that model of pedants, Dr. Philopatris Parr? I understand your foreign lingos too little to attempt it, but pretty things might be said upon the memorable tureen which he begged of Lord Somebody, whom he afterwards wished to prove to be mad. For example, I would adopt some of the leading phrases of *independent*, *high-souled*, *contentus parvo*, and so forth, with which he is bespattered in the Edinburgh, and declare it *our* opinion, that, if indulged with the three wishes of Prior's tale, he would answer, like the heroine Corisca—

'A ladle to my silver dish
Is all I want, is all I wish.'

I did *not* review Miss Edgeworth, nor do I think it all well done; at least, it falls below my opinion of that lady's merits. Indeed, I have contributed nothing to the last Review, and am, therefore, according to all rules, the more entitled to criticise it freely. The conclusion of the article on Sir John Moore is transcendently written; and I think I can venture to say, '*aut Erasmus, aut Diabolus.*' Your sugar-cake is very far from being a heavy *bon-bon;*

but there I think we stop. The Missionaries, though very good, is on a subject rather stale, and much of the rest is absolute wading.

"As an excuse for my own indolence, I have been in the Highlands for some time past; and who should I meet there, of all fowls in the air, but your friend Mr. Blackburn, to whom I was so much obliged for the care he took of my late unfortunate relative, at your friendly request. The recognition was unfortunately made just when I was leaving the country; and as he was in a gig, and I on the driving-seat of a carriage, the place of meeting a narrow Highland road, which looked as if forty patent ploughs had furrowed it, we had not time or space for so long a greeting as we could have wished. He has a capital good house on the banks of the Leven, about three miles below its discharge from the lake, and very near the classical spot where Matthew Bramble and his whole family were conducted by Smollett, and where Smollett himself was born. There is a new inducement for you to come to Caledon. Your health, thank God, is now no impediment; and I am told sugar and rum excel even whisky—so your purse must be proportionally distended."

The unfortunate brother, the blot of the family, to whom Scott alludes in this letter, had disappointed all the hopes under which his friends sent him to Jamaica. It may be remarked, as characteristic of Scott at this time, that, in the various letters to Ellis concerning Daniel, he speaks of him as his *relation*, never as his *brother;* and it must also be mentioned, as a circumstance suggesting that Daniel had retained, after all, some sense of pride, that his West Indian patron was allowed by himself to remain, to the end of their connection, in ignorance of what his distinguished brother had thus thought fit to suppress. Mr. Blackburn, in fact, never knew that Daniel was Walter Scott's brother, until he was applied to for some information respecting him on my own behalf, after this narrative was begun. The story is, shortly, that the adventurer's habits of dissipation proved incurable; but he finally left Jamaica under a stigma which Walter Scott regarded with utter severity. Being employed in some service against a refractory or insurgent body of negroes, he had exhibited a lamentable deficiency of spirit and conduct. He returned to Scotland a dishonored man; and, though he found shelter and compassion from his mother, his brother would never see him

again. Nay, when, soon after, his health, shattered by dissolute indulgence, and probably the intolerable load of shame, gave way altogether, and he died, as yet a young man, the poet refused either to attend his funeral, or to wear mourning for him, like the rest of the family. Thus sternly, when in the height and pride of his blood, could Scott, whose heart was never hardened against the distress of an enemy, recoil from the disgrace of a brother. It is a more pleasing part of my duty to add, that he spoke to me, twenty years afterwards, in terms of great and painful contrition for the austerity with which he had conducted himself on this occasion. I must add, moreover, that he took a warm interest in a natural child whom Daniel had bequeathed to his mother's care; and, after the old lady's death, religiously supplied her place as the boy's protector.

About this time, the edition of Sir Ralph Sadler's State Papers, &c., (3 vols. royal 4to,) was at length completed by Scott, and published by Constable; but the letters which passed between the editor and the bookseller show that their personal estrangement had as yet undergone slender alteration. The collection of the Sadler papers was chiefly the work of Mr. Arthur Clifford; but Scott drew up the Memoir and Notes, and superintended the printing. His account of the Life of Sadler * extends to thirty pages; and both it and his notes are written with all that lively solicitude about points of antiquarian detail, which accompanied him through so many tasks less attractive than the personal career of a distinguished statesman intimately connected with the fortunes of Mary Queen of Scots. Some volumes of the edition of Somers's Tracts (which he had undertaken for Mr. Miller and other booksellers of London, two or three years before) were also published about the same period; but that compilation was not finished (13 vols. royal 4to) until 1812. His part in it (for which the booksellers paid him 1300 guineas) was diligently performed, and shows abundant traces of his sagacious under-

* Republished in the Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. iv.

standing and graceful expression. His editorial labors on Dryden, Swift, and these other collections, were gradually storing his mind with that minute and accurate knowledge of the leading persons and events both of Scotch and English history, which made his conversation on such subjects that of one who had rather lived with than read about the departed; while, unlike other antiquaries, he always preserved the keenest interest in the transactions of his own time.

The reader has seen that, during his stay in London in the spring of this year, Scott became strongly impressed with a suspicion that the Duke of Portland's Cabinet could not much longer hold together; and the letters which have been quoted, when considered along with the actual course of subsequent events, can leave little doubt that he had gathered this impression from the tone of Mr. Canning's private conversation as to the recent management of the War Department by Lord Castlereagh. It is now known that, as early as Easter, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs had informed the head of the Government that, unless the Secretary for War and the Colonies were replaced by a more competent person, he himself must withdraw from the Ministry; that the Duke of Portland and the majority of the Cabinet concurred in the necessity of Lord Castlereagh's removal, but pressed Mr. Canning to allow the matter to lie over until the conclusion of the Parliamentary Session; that Mr. Canning, reluctantly agreeing to this delay, continued to sit for some months in the same Cabinet with the colleague whose eventual dismissal had been conceded to his representation; and that when, on the 20th of September, the Duke of Portland at length informed him of Mr. Canning's resolution, with the date of its original communication to his Grace and the other Ministers, Lord Castlereagh tendered his resignation, and wrote the same day to Mr. Canning, reproaching him with double-dealing.

"Having," he said, "pronounced it unfit that I should remain charged with the conduct of the war, and made my situation as a Minister of the Crown dependent on your will and pleasure, you continued to sit in the same Cabinet with me, and leave me not

only in the persuasion that I possessed your confidence and support as a colleague, but allowed me, in breach of every principle of good faith, both public and private, to originate and proceed in the execution of a new enterprise of the most arduous and important nature, (the Walcheren Expedition,) with your apparent concurrence and ostensible approbation. You were fully aware that, if my situation in the government had been disclosed to me, I could not have submitted to remain one moment in office, without the entire abandonment of my private honor and public duty. You knew I was deceived, and you continued to deceive me."

The result was a duel on the morning of the 21st, in which Mr. Canning was attended by Mr. Charles Ellis (now Lord Seaford) as his second. Mr. Canning, at the second fire, was severely wounded in the thigh, while his antagonist had a narrow escape, a button on the lapel of his coat having been shot off. In consequence of this quarrel, both Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning retired from office; their example was followed by the Duke of Portland himself; and after fruitless negotiations with Lords Grey and Grenville, Mr. Percival became First Lord of the Treasury, as well as Chancellor of the Exchequer; while the Marquis Wellesley took the Seals of the Foreign Department, and Lord Liverpool removed from the Home Office to that which Lord Castlereagh had occupied. There were some other changes, but Scott's friend, Mr. R. Dundas, (now Lord Melville,) remained in his place at the head of the Board of Control.

While the public mind was occupied with the duel and its yet uncertain results, Scott wrote as follows to the nearest relation and most intimate friend of Mr. Canning's second:—

"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"Ashestiel, Sept. 26, 1809.

"My dear Ellis,

"Your letter gave me great pleasure, especially the outside, for Canning's frank assured me that his wound was at least not materially serious. So for once the envelope of your letter was even more welcome than the contents. That harebrained Irishman's letter carries absurdity upon the face of it, for surely he would have had much more reason for personal animosity had Canning made the matter public, against the wishes of his uncle and every other person concerned, than for his consenting, at their request, that it should remain a secret, and leaving it to them

to make such communication to Lord C. as they should think proper, and when they should think proper. I am ill situated for the explanations I would wish to give, but I have forwarded copies of the letters to Lord Dalkeith, a high-spirited and independent young nobleman, in whose opinion Mr. Canning would, I think, wish to stand well. I have also taken some measures to prevent the good folks of Edinburgh from running after any straw that may be thrown into the wind. I wrote a very hurried note to Mr. C. Ellis the instant I *saw* the accident in the papers, not knowing exactly where you might be, and trusting he would excuse my extreme anxiety and solicitude upon the occasion.

"I see, among other reports, that my friend, Robert Dundas, is mentioned as Secretary at War. I confess I shall be both vexed and disappointed if he, of whose talents and opinions I think very highly, should be prevailed on to embark in so patched and crazy a vessel as can now be lashed together, and that upon a sea which promises to be sufficiently boisterous. My own hopes of every kind are as low as the heels of my boots, and methinks I would say to any friend of mine as Tybalt says to Benvolio—'What! art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?' I suppose the Doctor will be *move* the first, and then the Whigs will come in like a land-flood, and lay the country at the feet of Buonaparte for peace. This, if his devil does not fail, he will readily patch up, and send a few hundred thousands among our coach-driving noblesse, and perhaps among our Princes of the Blood. With the influence acquired by such *gages de amitié*, and by ostentatious hospitality at his court to all those idiots who will forget the rat-trap of the *detenus*, and crowd there for novelty, there will be, in the course of five or six years, what we have never yet seen, a real French party in this country. To this you are to add all the Burdettites, men, who, rather than want combustibles, will fetch brimstone from hell. It is not these whom I fear, however,—it is the vile and degrading spirit of *egoisme* so prevalent among the higher ranks, especially among the highest. God forgive me if I do them injustice, but I think champagne duty free would go a great way to seduce some of them; and is it not a strong symptom when people, knowing and feeling their own weakness, will, from mere selfishness and pride, suffer the vessel to drive on the shelves, rather than she should be saved by the only pilot capable of the task? I will be much obliged to you to let me know what is likely to be done—whether any fight can yet be made, or if all is over. Lord Melville had been furious for some time against this Administration—I think *he* will hardly lend a hand to clear the wreck. I should think, if Marquis Wellesley returns, he might form a steady Administration, but God wot he must condemn most of the present rotten planks before he can lay down the new vessel. Above all, let me know how Canning's recovery goes on. We must think what is to be done about the Review. Ever yours truly

W. S."

Scott's views as to the transactions of this period, and the principal parties concerned in them, were considerably altered by the observation of subsequent years; but I have been much interested with watching the course of his sentiments and opinions on such subjects; and, in the belief that others may feel in the same way with myself, I shall insert, without comment, some further extracts from this correspondence.

To the same.

"Ashestiel, Nov. 3, 1809.

"My dear Ellis,

"I had your letter some time ago, which gave me less comfort in the present public emergency than your letters usually do. Frankly, I see great doubts, not to say an impossibility, of Canning's attaining that rank among the Opposition which will enable him to command the use of their shoulders to place him where—you cannot be more convinced than I am—he is entitled to stand. The *condottieri* of the Grenvilles—for they have no political principles, and therefore no political party, detached from their immense influence over individuals—will hardly be seduced from their standard to that of Canning, by an eloquence which has been exerted upon them in vain, even when they might have hoped to be gainers by listening to it. The *soi-disant* Whigs stick together like burs. The ragged regiment of Burdett and Folkstone is under yet stricter discipline, for you may have observed that no lover was ever so jealous of his mistress as Sir Francis is of his mob popularity—witness the fate of Paull, Tierney, even Wardle; in short, of whomsoever presumed to rival the brazen image whom the mob of Westminster has set up. That either, or both of these parties, will be delighted with the accession of our friend's wisdom and eloquence, cannot for a moment be disputed. That the Grenvilles, in particular, did he only propose to himself a slice of the great pudding, would allow him to help himself where the plums lie thickest, cannot be doubted. But I think it is very doubtful whether they, closely banded and confident of triumph as they at present are, will accept of a colleague upon terms which would make him a master; and unless Canning has these, it appears to me that *we* (the Republic) should be no better than if he had retained his office in the present, or rather late, Administration. But how far, in throwing himself altogether into the arms of Opposition at this crisis, Canning will injure himself with the large and sound party who profess *Pittism*, is, I really think, worthy of consideration. The influence of his name is at present as great as you or I could wish it; but those who wish to undermine it, want but, according to our Scottish proverb, 'a hair to

make a tether of.' I admit his hand is very difficult to play, and much as I love and admire him, I am most interested because it is the decided interest of his country, that he should pique, repique, and capot his antagonists. But you know much of the delicacy of the game lies in *discarding*—so I hope he will be in no hurry on throwing out his cards.

"I am the more anxious on this score, because I feel an internal conviction that neither Marquis Wellesley nor Lord Melville will lend their names to bolster out this rump of an Administration. Symptoms of this are said to have transpired in Scotland, but in this retirement I cannot learn upon what authority. Should this prove so, I confess my best wishes would be realized, because I cannot see how Percival could avoid surrendering at discretion, and taking, perhaps, a peerage. We should then have an Administration *à la Pitt*, which is a much better thing than an Opposition, however conducted or headed, which, like a wave of the sea, forms indeed but a single body when it is rolling towards the shore, but dashes into foam and dispersion the instant it reaches its object. Should Canning and the above-named noble peers come to understand each other, joined to all among the present Ministry whom their native good sense, and an attachment to good warm places, will lead to hear reason, it does seem to me that we might form a deeper front to the enemy than we have presented since the death of Pitt, or rather since the dissolution of his first Administration. But if this be a dream, as it may very probably be, I still hope Canning will take his own ground in Parliament, and hoist his own standard. Sooner or later it must be successful. So much for politics—about which, after all, my neighbors the *black-cocks* know about as much as I do.

"I have a great deal to write you about a new poem which I have on the anvil—also, upon the melancholy death of a favorite greyhound bitch—rest her body, since I dare not say soul! She was of high blood and excellent promise. Should any of your sporting friends have a whelp to spare, of a good kind, and of the female sex, I would be grateful beyond measure, especially if she has had the distemper. As I have quite laid aside the gun, coursing is my only and constant amusement, and my valued pair of four-legged champions, Douglas and Percy, wax old and *unfeary*. Ever yours truly,

W. S."

"*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

"Gloucester Lodge, Nov. 13, 1809.

"My dear Sir,

"I am very sensibly gratified by your kind expressions, whether of condolence or congratulation, and I acknowledge, if not (with your Highland writer) the synonymousness of the two terms, at least the union of the two sentiments, as applied to my present

circumstances. I am not so heroically fond of being *out*, (*quátenus out*,) as not to consider that a matter of condolence. But I am at the same time sufficiently convinced of the desirableness of not being *in*, when one should be *in* to no purpose, either of public advantage or personal credit, to be satisfied that on that ground I am entitled to your congratulations.

"I should be very happy indeed to look forward, with the prospect of being able to realize it, to the trip to Scotland which you suggest to me; and still more to the visit included therein, which, as you hold it out, would not be the least part of my temptation. Of this, however, I hope we shall have opportunities of talking before the season arrives; for I reckon upon your spring visit to London, and think of it, I assure you, with great pleasure, as likely to happen at a period when I shall have it more in my power than I have had on any former occasion to enjoy the advantage of it. You will find me not in quite so romantic a scene of seclusion and tranquillity here as that which you describe—but very tranquil and secluded nevertheless, at a mile and a half's distance from Hyde Park Corner—a distance considerable enough, as I now am, to save me from any very overwhelming 'unda salutantium.'

"Here, or any where else, I beg you to believe in the very sincere satisfaction which I shall derive from your society, and which I do derive from the assurance of your regard and good opinion. Ever, my dear sir, very truly and faithfully yours,

GEO. CANNING.

"P. S.—I expect, in the course of this week, to send you a copy of a more ample statement of the circumstances of my retirement, which the misrepresentations of some who, I *think*, must have known they were misrepresenting, (though *that* I must not say,) have rendered necessary."

I could not quote more largely from these political letters without trespassing against the feelings of distinguished individuals still alive. I believe the extracts which I have given are sufficient to illustrate the sagacity with which Scott had at that early period apprehended the dangers to which the political career of Mr. Canning was exposed, by the jealousy of the old Tory aristocracy on the one hand, and the insidious flatteries of Whig intriguers on the other. Even in communications which he must have known would pass under Mr. Canning's own eye, I think we may trace something of the lurking suspicion, that a propensity to tamper with intrigue might eventually develop itself in that great statesman's otherwise noble character. In after

years he certainly expressed himself concerning the quarrel of 1809 as if, on a cool retrospect, he considered the "harebrained Irishman" to have been much more sinned against than sinning; but his original impressions on this point had of course been modified by the subsequent lives of the two antagonists—as, indeed, his correspondence will be found to confess. I willingly turn from Scott's politics to some other matters, which about this time occupied a large share of his thoughts.

He had from his boyish days a great love for theatrical representation; and so soon as circumstances enabled him to practise extended hospitality, the chief actors of his time, whenever they happened to be in Scotland, were among the most acceptable of his guests. Mr. Charles Young was, I believe, the first of them of whom he saw much: as early as 1803, I find him writing of that gentleman to the Marchioness of Abercorn as a valuable addition to the society of Edinburgh; and down to the end of Scott's life, Mr. Young was never in the north without visiting him.

Another graceful and intelligent performer in whom he took a special interest, and of whom he saw a great deal in his private circle, was Miss Smith, afterwards Mrs. Bartley. But at the period of which I am now treating, his principal theatrical intimacy was with John Philip Kemble, and his sister, Mrs. Siddons, both of whom he appears to have often met at Lord Abercorn's villa near Stanmore, during his spring visits to London after the first establishment of his poetical celebrity. Of John Kemble's personal character and manners, he has recorded his impressions in a pleasing reviewal of Mr. Boaden's Memoir.* The great tragedian's love of black-letter learning, especially of dramatic antiquities, afforded a strong bond of fellowship; and I have heard Scott say that the only man who ever seduced him into very deep potations in his middle life was Kemble. He was frequently at Ashestiel, and the "fat Scotch butler," whom Mr. Skene has described to us, by name *John Macbeth*, made sore complaints of the bad hours kept on such occasions in one of the most regular of households;

* *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. xx.

but the watchings of the night were not more grievous to "Cousin Macbeth," as Kemble called the honest *beauffetier*, than were the hazards and fatigues of the morning to the representative of the Scotch usurper. Kemble's miseries during a rough gallop were quite as grotesque as those of his namesake, and it must be owned that species of distress was one from the contemplation of which his host could never derive any thing but amusement.

I have heard Scott chuckle with particular glee over the recollection of an excursion to the vale of the Ettrick, near which river the party were pursued by a bull. "Come, King John," said he, "we must even take the water;" and accordingly he and his daughter plunged into the stream. But King John, halting on the bank and surveying the river, which happened to be full and turbid, exclaimed, in his usual solemn manner,

——"The flood is angry, Sheriff;
Methinks I'll get me up into a tree." *

It was well that the dogs had succeeded in diverting the bull, because there was no tree at hand which could have sustained King John, nor, had that been otherwise, could so stately a personage have dismounted and ascended with such alacrity as circumstances would have required. He at length followed his friends through the river with the rueful dignity of Don Quixote.

It was this intercourse which led Scott to exert himself very strenuously, when some change in the administration of the Edinburgh stage became necessary, (I believe in 1808,) to prevail on Mr. Henry Siddons, the nephew of Kemble, to undertake the lease and management. Such an arrangement would, he expected, induce both Kemble and his sister to be more in Scotland than hitherto; and what he had seen of young Siddons himself led him to prognosticate a great improvement in the whole conduct of

* John Kemble's most familiar table-talk often flowed into blank verse; and so indeed did his sister's. Scott (who was a capital mimic) often repeated her tragic exclamation to a footboy during a dinner at Ashestiel,

"You've brought me water, boy,—I asked for beer.'

the northern stage. His wishes were at length accomplished in the summer of 1809. On this occasion he purchased a share, and became one of the acting trustees for the general body of proprietors; and thenceforth, during a long series of years, he continued to take a very lively concern in the proceedings of the Edinburgh company. In this he was plentifully encouraged by his domestic *camarilla;* for his wife had all a Frenchwoman's passion for the *spectacle;* and the elder of the two Ballantynes (both equally devoted to the company of players) was a regular newspaper critic of theatrical affairs, and in that capacity had already attained a measure of authority supremely gratifying to himself.

The first new play produced by Henry Siddons was the Family Legend of Joanna Baillie. This was, I believe, the first of her dramas that ever underwent the test of representation in her native kingdom; and Scott appears to have exerted himself most indefatigably in its behalf. He was consulted about all the *minutiæ* of costume, attended every rehearsal, and supplied the prologue. The play was better received than any other which the gifted authoress has since subjected to the same experiment; and how ardently Scott enjoyed its success will appear from a few specimens of the many letters which he addressed to his friend on the occasion.

The first of these letters is dated Edinburgh, October 27, 1809. He had gone into town for the purpose of entering his eldest boy at the High School.

"On receiving your long, kind letter yesterday, I sought out Siddons, who was equally surprised and delighted at your liberal arrangement about the Lady of the Rock. I will put all the names to rights, and retain enough of locality and personality to please the antiquary, without the least risk of bringing the clan Gillian about our ears. I went through the theatre, which is the most complete little thing of the kind I ever saw, elegantly fitted up, and large enough for every purpose. I trust, with you, that in this as in other cases, our Scotch poverty may be a counterbalance to our Scotch pride, and that we shall not need in my time a larger or more expensive building. Siddons himself observes, that even for the purposes of show (so paramount now-a-days) a moderate stage is better fitted than a large one, because the machinery is

pliable and manageable in proportion to its size. With regard to the equipment of the Family Legend, I have been much diverted with a discovery which I have made. I had occasion to visit our Lord Provost, (by profession a stocking-weaver,*) and was surprised to find the worthy Magistrate filled with a new-born zeal for the drama. He spoke of Mr. Siddons's merits with enthusiasm, and of Miss Baillie's powers almost with tears of rapture. Being a curious investigator of cause and effect, I never rested until I found out that this theatric rage which had seized his lordship of a sudden, was owing to a large order for hose, pantaloons, and plaids, for equipping the rival clans of Campbell and Maclean, and which Siddons was sensible enough to send to the warehouse of our excellent Provost. ..... The Laird † is just gone to the High School, and it is with inexpressible feeling that I hear him trying to babble the first words of Latin, the signal of commencing serious study, for his acquirements hitherto have been under the mild dominion of a governess. I felt very like Leontes—

> "Looking on the lines
> Of my boy's face, methought I did recall
> Thirty good years"—

And O my dear Miss Baillie, what a tale thirty years can tell even in an uniform and unhazardous course of life! How much I have reaped that I have never sown, and sown that I have never reaped! Always, I shall think it one of the proudest and happiest circumstances of my life that enables me to subscribe myself your faithful and affectionate friend,

W. S."

Three months later, he thus communicates the result of the experiment.

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie—Hampstead.*

"Jan. 30th, 1810.

"My dear Miss Baillie,

"You have only to imagine all that you could wish to give success to a play, and your conceptions will still fall short of the

* This magistrate was Mr. William Coulter, who died in office in April, 1810, and is said to have been greatly consoled on his death-bed by the prospect of so grand a funeral as must needs occur in the case of an actual Lord Provost of Auld Reekie. Scott used to *take him off* as saying at some public meeting, "Gentlemen, though doomed to the trade of a stocking-weaver, I was born with the soul of a *Sheepio!*" —(Scipio.)

† Young Walter Scott was called Gilnockie, the Laird of Gilnockie, or simply *the Laird*, in consequence of his childish admiration for Johnnie Armstrong, whose ruined tower is still extant at Gilnockie on the Esk, nearly opposite Netherby.

complete and decided triumph of the Family Legend. The house was crowded to a most extraordinary degree; many people had come from your native capital of the west; every thing that pretended to distinction, whether from rank or literature, was in the boxes, and in the pit such an aggregate mass of humanity as I have seldom if ever witnessed in the same space. It was quite obvious, from the beginning, that the cause was to be very fairly tried before the public, and that if any thing went wrong, no effort, even of your numerous and zealous friends, could have had much influence in guiding or restraining the general feeling. Some good-natured persons had been kind enough to propagate reports of a strong opposition, which, though I considered them as totally groundless, did not by any means lessen the extreme anxiety with which I waited the rise of the curtain. But in a short time I saw there was no ground whatever for apprehension, and yet I sat the whole time shaking for fear a scene-shifter, or a carpenter, or some of the subaltern actors, should make some blunder, and interrupt the feeling of deep and general interest which soon seized on the whole pit, box, and gallery, as Mr. Bayes has it. The scene on the rock struck the utmost possible effect into the audience, and you heard nothing but sobs on all sides. The banquet scene was equally impressive, and so was the combat. Of the greater scenes, that between Lorn and Helen in the castle of Maclean, that between Helen and her lover, and the examination of Maclean himself in Argyle's castle, were applauded to the very echo. Siddons announced the play '*for the rest of the week*,' which was received not only with a thunder of applause, but with cheering, and throwing up of hats and handkerchiefs. Mrs. Siddons supported her part incomparably, although just recovered from the indisposition mentioned in my last. Siddons himself played Lorn very well indeed, and moved and looked with great spirit. A Mr. Terry, who promises to be a fine performer, went through the part of the Old Earl with great taste and effect. For the rest I cannot say much, excepting that from highest to lowest they were most accurately perfect in their parts, and did their very best. Malcolm de Grey was tolerable, but *stickish*—Maclean came off decently—but the conspirators were sad hounds. You are, my dear Miss Baillie, too much of a democrat in your writings; you allow life, soul, and spirit to these inferior creatures of the drama, and expect they will be the better of it. Now it was obvious to me, that the poor monsters, whose mouths are only of use to spout the vapid blank verse which your modern playwright puts into the part of the confidant and subaltern villain of his piece, did not know what to make of the energetic and poetical diction which even these subordinate departments abound with in the Legend. As the play greatly exceeded the usual length, (lasting till half past ten,) we intend, when it is repeated to-night, to omit some of the passages where the weight necessarily fell on the weakest of our host, although

we may hereby injure the detail of the plot. The scenery was very good, and the rock, without appearance of pantomime, was so contrived as to place Mrs. Siddons in a very precarious situation to all appearance. The dresses were more tawdry than I should have judged proper, but expensive and showy. I got my brother John's Highland recruiting party to reënforce the garrison of Inverary, and as they mustered beneath the porch of the castle, and seemed to fill the court-yard behind, the combat scene had really the appearance of reality. Siddons has been most attentive, anxious, assiduous, and docile, and had drilled his troops so well that the prompter's aid was unnecessary, and I do not believe he gave a single hint the whole night; nor were there any false or ridiculous accents or gestures even among the underlings, though God knows they fell often far short of the true spirit. Mrs. Siddons spoke the epilogue* extremely well: the prologue,† which I will send you in its revised state, was also very well received. Mrs. Scott sends her kindest compliments of congratulation; she had a party of thirty friends in one small box, which she was obliged to watch like a clucking hen till she had gathered her whole flock, for the crowd was insufferable. I am going to see the Legend to-night, when I shall enjoy it quietly, for last night I was so much interested in its reception that I cannot say I was at leisure to attend to the feelings arising from the representation itself. People are dying to read it. If you think of suffering a single edition to be printed to gratify their curiosity, I will take care of it. But I do not advise this, because until printed no other theatres can have it before you give leave. My kind respects attend Miss Agnes Baillie, and believe me ever your obliged and faithful servant,

WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S. A friend of mine writes dramatic criticisms now and then. I have begged him to send me a copy of the Edinburgh paper in which he inserts his lucubrations, and I will transmit it to you: he is a play-going man, and more in the habit of expressing himself on such subjects than most people.—In case you have not got a play-bill, I will enclose one, because I think in my own case I should like to see it."

The Family Legend had a continuous run of fourteen nights, and was soon afterwards printed and published by the Ballantynes.

The theatrical critic alluded to in the last of these letters was the elder of those brothers; the newspaper in which

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* Written by Henry Mackenzie.

† See Scott's Poetical Works, vol. viii. p. 387.

his lucubrations then appeared was the *Edinburgh Evening Courant;* and so it continued until 1817, when the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* was purchased by the printing company in the Canongate; ever after which period it was edited by the prominent member of that firm, and from time to time was the vehicle of many fugitive pieces by the unseen partner.

In one of these letters there occurs, for the first time, the name of a person who soon obtained a large share of Scott's regard and confidence—the late ingenious comedian, Mr. Daniel Terry. He had received a good education, and been regularly trained as an architect; but abandoned that profession, at an early period of life, for the stage, and was now beginning to attract attention as a valuable and efficient actor in Henry Siddons's new company at Edinburgh. Already he and the Ballantynes were constant companions, and through his familiarity with them, Scott had abundant opportunities of appreciating his many excellent and agreeable qualities. He had the manners and feelings of a gentleman. Like John Kemble, he was deeply skilled in the old literature of the drama, and he rivalled Scott's own enthusiasm for the antiquities of *vertu*. Their epistolary correspondence in after days was frequent, and will supply me with many illustrations of Scott's minor tastes and habits. As their letters lie before me, they appear as if they had all been penned by the same hand. Terry's idolatry of his new friend induced him to imitate his writing so zealously, that Scott used to say, if he were called on to swear to any document, the utmost he could venture to attest would be, that it was either in his own hand or in Terry's. The actor, perhaps unconsciously, mimicked him in other matters with hardly inferior pertinacity. His small, lively features had acquired, before I knew him, a truly ludicrous cast of Scott's graver expression; he had taught his tiny eyebrow the very trick of the poet's meditative frown; and, to crown all, he so habitually affected his tone and accent, that, though a native of Bath, a stranger could hardly have doubted he must be a Scotchman. These things afforded Scott and all their mutual acquaintances much diversion;

but perhaps no Stoic could have helped being secretly gratified by seeing a clever and sensible man convert himself into a living type and symbol of admiration.

Charles Mathews and Terry were once thrown out of a gig together, and the former received an injury which made him halt ever afterwards, while the latter escaped unhurt. "Dooms, *Dauniel*," said Mathews, when they next met, "what a pity that it wasna your luck to get the game leg, mon! Your *Shirra* wad hae been the very thing, ye ken, an' ye wad hae been croose till ye war coffined!" Terry, though he did not always relish bantering on this subject, replied readily and good-humoredly by a quotation from Peter Pindar's *Bozzy and Piozzi*:—

> "When Foote his leg by some misfortune broke,
> Says I to Johnson, all by way of joke,
> Sam, sir, in Paragraph will soon be clever,
> He'll take off Peter better now than ever."

Mathews's mirthful caricature of Terry's sober mimicry of Scott was one of the richest extravaganzas of his social hours; but indeed I have often seen this Proteus dramatize the whole Ballantyne group with equal success—while Rigdumfunnidos screamed with delight, and Aldiborontiphoscophornio faintly chuckled, and the Sheriff, gently smiling, pushed round his decanters.

Miss Seward died in March, 1809. She bequeathed her poetry to Scott, with an injunction to publish it speedily, and prefix a sketch of her life; while she made her letters (of which she had kept copies) the property of Mr. Constable, in the assurance that due regard for his own interests would forthwith place the whole collection before the admiring world. Scott superintended accordingly the edition of the lady's verses, which was published, in three volumes, in August, 1810, by John Ballantyne & Co.; and Constable lost no time in announcing her correspondence, which appeared a year later, in six volumes. The following letter alludes to these productions, as well as a comedy by Mr. Henry Siddons, which he had recently brought out on the Edinburgh stage; and lastly, to the Lady of the Lake, the printing of which had, by this time, made great progress.

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

"Edinburgh, March 18, 1810.

"Nothing, my dear Miss Baillie, can loiter in my hands, when you are commanding officer. I have put the play in progress through the press, and find my publishers, the Ballantynes, had previously determined to make Mr. Longman, the proprietor of your other works, the offer of this. All that can be made of it in such a cause certainly shall, and the booksellers shall be content with as little profit as can in reason be expected. I understand the trade well, and will take care of this. Indeed, I believe the honor weighs more with the booksellers here than the profit of a single play. So much for business. You are quite right in the risk I run of failure in a third poem; yet I think I understand the British public well enough to set every sail towards the popular breeze. One set of folks pique themselves upon sailing in the wind's eye—another class drive right before it; now I would neither do one or t'other, but endeavor to go, as the sailors express it, *upon* a wind, and make use of it to carry me my own way, instead of going precisely in its direction; or, to speak in a dialect with which I am more familiar, I would endeavor to make my horse carry me, instead of attempting to carry my horse. I have a vain-glorious presentiment of success upon this occasion, which may very well deceive me, but which I would hardly confess to any body but you, nor perhaps to you neither, unless I knew you would find it out whether I told it you or no,—

"You are a sharp observer, and you look
Quite through the eyes of men."

"I plead guilty to the charge of ill-breeding to Miss ***. The despair which I used to feel on receiving poor Miss Seward's letters, whom I really liked, gave me a most unsentimental horror for sentimental letters. The crossest thing I ever did in my life was to poor, dear Miss Seward; she wrote me in an evil hour (I had never seen her, mark that!) a long and most passionate epistle upon the death of a dear friend, whom I had never seen neither, concluding with a charge not to attempt answering the said letter, for she was dead to the world, &c. &c. &c. Never were commands more literally obeyed. I remained as silent as the grave, till the lady made so many inquiries after me, that I was afraid of my death being prematurely announced by a sonnet or an elegy. When I did see her, however, she interested me very much, and I am now doing penance for my ill-breeding, by submitting to edit her posthumous poetry, most of which is absolutely execrable. This, however, is the least of my evils, for when she proposed this bequest to me, which I could not in decency refuse, she combined it with a request that I would publish her whole literary correspondence. This I declined on principle, having a particular aver-

sion at perpetuating that sort of gossip; but what availed it? Lo! to insure the publication, she left it to an Edinburgh bookseller; and I anticipate the horror of seeing myself advertised for a live poet on a painted streamer, for I understand all her friends are depicted therein in body, mind, and manners. So much for the risks of sentimental correspondence.

"Siddons's play was truly flat, but not unprofitable; he contrived to get it well propped in the acting, and—though it was such a thing as if you or I had written it (supposing, that is, what in your case, and I think even in my own, is impossible) would have been damned seventy-fold,—yet it went through with applause. Such is the humor of the multitude; and they will quarrel with venison for being dressed a day sooner than fashion requires, and batten on a neck of mutton, because, on the whole, it is rather better than they expected; however, Siddons is a good lad, and deserves success, through whatever channel it comes. His mother is here just now. I was quite shocked to see her, for the last two years have made a dreadful inroad both in voice and person; she has, however, a very bad cold. I hope she will be able to act Jane de Montfort, which we have long planned. Very truly yours,

W. S."

CHAPTER IX.

AFFAIR OF THOMAS SCOTT'S EXTRACTORSHIP DISCUSSED IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS — SPEECHES OF LORD LAUDERDALE — LORD MELVILLE, &c. — LORD HOLLAND AT THE FRIDAY CLUB — PUBLICATION OF THE LADY OF THE LAKE — CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING VERSIFICATION WITH ELLIS AND CANNING — THE POEM CRITICISED BY JEFFREY AND MACKINTOSH — LETTERS TO SOUTHEY AND MORRITT — ANECDOTES FROM JAMES BALLANTYNE'S MEMORANDA. — 1810.

There occurred, while the latter cantos of the Lady of the Lake were advancing through the press, an affair which gave Scott so much uneasiness, that I must not pass it in silence. Each Clerk of Session had in those days the charge of a particular office or department in the Great Register House of Scotland; and the appointment of the

subalterns, who therein recorded and extracted the decrees of the Supreme Court, was in his hands. Some of these situations, renumerated according to a fixed rate of fees, by the parties concerned in the suits before the Court, were valuable, and considered not at all below the pretensions of gentlemen who had been regularly trained for the higher branches of the law. About the time when Thomas Scott's affairs as a Writer to the Signet fell into derangement, but before they were yet hopeless, a post became vacant in his brother's office, which yielded an average income of £400, and which he would very willingly have accepted. The poet, however, considered a respectable man, who had grown gray at an inferior desk in the same department, as entitled to promotion, and exerted the right of patronage in his favor accordingly, bestowing on his brother the place which this person left. It was worth about £250 a-year, and its duties being entirely mechanical, might be in great part, and often had been in former times entirely, discharged by deputy. Mr. Thomas Scott's appointment to this *Extractorship* took place at an early stage of the proceedings of that Commission for inquiring into the Scotch System of Judicature, which had the poet for its secretary. Thomas, very soon afterwards, was compelled to withdraw from Edinburgh, and retired, as has been mentioned, to the Isle of Man, leaving his official duties to the care of a substitute, who was to allow him a certain share of the fees, until circumstances should permit his return. It was not, however, found so easy, as he and his friends had anticipated, to wind up his accounts, and settle with his creditors. Time passed on, and being an active man, in the prime vigor of life, he accepted a commission in the Manx Fencibles, a new corps raised by the lord of that island, the Duke of Athol, who willingly availed himself of the military experience which Mr. Scott had acquired in the course of his long connection with the Edinburgh Volunteers. These Manx Fencibles, however, were soon dissolved, and Thomas Scott, now engaged in the peaceful occupation of collecting materials for a History of the Isle of Man, to which his brother had strongly directed

his views, was anxiously expecting a final arrangement, which might allow him to reëstablish himself in Edinburgh and resume his seat in the Register House, when he received the intelligence that the Commission of Judicature had resolved to abolish that, among many other similar posts. This was a severe blow; but it was announced, at the same time, that the Commission meant to recommend to Parliament a scheme of compensation for the functionaries who were to be discharged at their suggestion, and that his retired allowance would probably amount to £130 per annum.

In the spring of 1810, the Commission gave in its report, and was dissolved; and a bill, embodying the details of an extensive reform, founded on its suggestions, was laid before the House of Commons, who adopted most of its provisions, and among others passed, without hesitation, the clauses respecting compensation for the holders of abolished offices. But when the bill reached the House of Lords, several of these clauses were severely reprobated by some Peers of the Whig party, and the case of Thomas Scott, in particular, was represented as a gross and flagrant *job*. The following extract from Hansard's Debates will save me the trouble of further details:—

"THOMAS SCOTT.

"THE EARL OF LAUDERDALE moved an amendment, 'that those only be remunerated who were mentioned in the schedule.' The application of this amendment was towards the compensation intended for Mr. Thomas Scott, the brother of Walter Scott. It appeared the former was appointed to the office of an Extractor at a time when it must have been foreseen that those offices would be abolished. Mr. Thomas Scott had not been connected previously with that sort of situation, but was recruiting for the Manx Fencibles in the Isle of Man at the time, and had not served the office, but performed its duties through the means of a deputy. He considered this transaction a perfect job. By the present bill, Mr. T. Scott would have £130 for life as an indemnity for an office, the duties of which he never had performed, while those clerks who had labored for twenty years had no adequate remuneration.

"VISCOUNT MELVILLE supported the general provisions of the bill. With respect to Mr. T. Scott, he certainly had been in business, had met with misfortunes, and on account of his circum-

stances, went to the Isle of Man; but with respect to his appointment, this was the fact; a situation in the same office [of the Register House] with that of his brother, of £400, became vacant, and he [Walter Scott] thought it his duty to promote a person who had meritoriously filled the situation which was afterwards granted to Mr. T. Scott. His brother was therefore so disinterested as to have appointed him to the inferior instead of the superior situation. The noble viscount saw no injustice in the case, and there was no partiality but what was excusable.

"Lord Holland thought no man who knew him would suspect that he was unfavorable to men of literature; on the contrary, he felt a great esteem for the literary character of Walter Scott. He and his colleagues ever thought it their duty to reward literary merit without regard to political opinions; and he wished he could pay the same compliment to the noble and learned viscount, for he must ever recollect that the poet Burns, of immortal memory, had been shamefully neglected. But with respect to Mr. Thomas Scott, the question was quite different, for he was placed in a situation which he and his brother knew at the time would be abolished; and from Parliament he claimed an indemnity for what could not be pronounced any loss. It was unjust as regarded others, and improper as it respected Parliament.

"The amendment was then proposed and negatived. The bill was accordingly read the third time and passed."—Hansard, *June*, 1810.

I shall now extract various passages from Scott's letters to his brother and other friends, which will show what his feelings were while this affair continued under agitation.

"*To Thomas Scott, Esq., Douglas, Isle of Man.*

"Edinburgh, 25th May, 1810.

"My dear Tom,

"I write under some anxiety for your interest, though I sincerely hope it is groundless. The devil or James Gibson * has put it into Lord Lauderdale's head to challenge your annuity, in the House of Lords, on account of your non-residence, and your holding a commission in the militia. His Lordship kept his intention as secret as possible, but fortunately it reached the kind and friendly ear of Colin Mackenzie. Lord Melville takes the matter up stoutly, and I have little doubt will carry his point, unless the whole bill is given up for the season, which some concurring oppo-

* James Gibson, Esq. W. S. (now Sir James Gibson Craig of Riccarton, Bart.) had always been regarded as one of the most able and active of the Scotch Whigs—whose acknowledged chief in those days was the Earl of Lauderdale.

sition from different quarters renders not impossible. In that case, you must, at the expense of a little cash and time, show face in Edinburgh for a week or two and attend your office. But I devoutly hope all will be settled by the bill being passed as it now stands. This is truly a most unworthy exertion of private spite and malice, but I trust it will be in vain."

* * * * * *

"Edinburgh, June 12th.

"Dear Tom,

"I have the pleasure to acquaint you that I have every reason to believe that the bill will pass this week. It has been *committed;* upon which occasion Lord Lauderdale stated various objections, all of which were repelled. He then adverted to your case with some sufficiently bitter observations. Lord Melville advised him to reserve his epithets till he was pleased to state his cause, as he would pledge himself to show that they were totally inapplicable to the transaction. The Duke of Montrose also intimated his intention to defend it, which I take very kind of his Grace, as he went down on purpose, and declared his resolution to attend whenever the business should be stirred. So much for

'The Lord of Graham, by every chief adored,
Who boasts his native fillibeg restored.'" *

* * * * * * *

"Edinburgh, 21st June, 1810.

"My dear Tom,

"The bill was read a third time in the House of Lords, on which occasion Lord Lauderdale made his attack, which Lord Melville answered. There was not much said on either side: Lord Holland supported Lord Lauderdale, and the bill passed without a division. So you have fairly doubled Cape Lauderdale. I believe his principal view was to insult my feelings, in which he has been very unsuccessful, for I thank God I feel nothing but the most hearty contempt both for the attack and the sort of paltry malice by which alone it could be dictated."

The next letter is addressed to an old friend of Scott's, who, though a stout Whig, had taken a lively interest in the success of his brother's parliamentary business.

"*To John Richardson, Esq., Fludger Street, Westminster.*

"Edinburgh, 3d July, 1810.

"My dear Richardson,

"I ought before now to have written you my particular thanks for your kind attention to the interest which I came so strangely

* These lines are slightly altered from the Rolliad, p. 308. The Duke had obtained the repeal of an act of Parliament forbidding the use of the Highland garb.

and unexpectedly to have in the passing of the Judicature Bill. The only purpose which I suppose Lord Lauderdale had in view was to state charges which could neither be understood nor refuted, and to give me a little pain by dragging my brother's misfortunes into public notice. If the last was his aim, I am happy to say it has most absolutely miscarried; for I have too much contempt for the motive which dictated his lordship's eloquence to feel much for its thunders. My brother loses by the bill from £150 to £200, which no power short of an act of Parliament could have taken from him; and, far from having a view to the compensation, he is a considerable loser by its being substituted for the actual receipts of his office. I assure you I am very sensible of your kind and friendly activity and zeal in my brother's behalf.

"I received the Guerras * safe; it is a fine copy, and I think very cheap, considering how difficult it is now to procure foreign books. I shall be delighted to have the Traité des Tournois. I propose, on the 12th, setting forth for the West Highlands, with the desperate purpose of investigating the caves of Staffa, Egg, and Skye. There was a time when this was a heroic undertaking, and when the return of Samuel Johnson from achieving it was hailed by the Edinburgh literati with 'per varios casus,' and other scraps of classical gratulation equally new and elegant. But the harvest of glory has been entirely reaped by the early discoverers; and in an age when every London citizen makes Lochlomond his wash-pot, and throws his shoe over Ben-Nevis, a man may endure every hardship, and expose himself to every danger of the Highland seas, from sea-sickness to the jaws of the great sea-snake, without gaining a single leaf of laurel for his pains.

"The best apology for bestowing all this tediousness upon you is, that John Burnet is dinning into the ears of the Court a botheration about the politics of the magnificent city of Culross. But I will release you sooner than I fear I shall escape myself, with the assurance that I am ever yours most truly,

WALTER SCOTT."

I conclude the affair of Thomas Scott with a brief extract from a letter which his brother addressed to him a few weeks later:—"Lord Holland has been in Edinburgh, and we met accidentally at a public party. He made up to me, but I remembered his part in your affair, and *cut* him with as little remorse as an old pen." The meeting here alluded to occurred at a dinner of the *Friday Club*, at Fortune's Tavern, to which Lord Holland was introduced by Mr. Thomas Thomson. Two gentlemen, who

* A copy of the *Guerras Civiles de Granada*.

were present, inform me that they distinctly remember a very painful scene, for which, knowing Scott's habitual good nature and urbanity, they had been wholly unprepared. One of them (Lord Jeffrey) adds, that this was the only example of rudeness he ever witnessed in him in the course of a lifelong familiarity. I have thought it due to truth and justice not to omit this disagreeable passage in Scott's life, which shows how even his mind could at times be unhinged and perverted by the malign influence of political spleen. It is consolatory to add, that he enjoyed much agreeable intercourse in after days with Lord Holland, and retained no feelings of resentment towards any other of the Whig gentlemen named in the preceding correspondence.*

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* I subjoin a list of the members of *The Friday Club*, which was instituted in June, 1803, (on the model, I believe, of Johnson's at the Turk's Head,) down to the period of Scott's death. The others marked, like his name, by an asterisk, are also dead.

1803 *Sir James Hall	1804 *Alex. Hamilton
*Professor Dugald Stewart	*Dr. Coventry
*Professor John Playfair	*Professor John Robison
Rev. Arch. Alison	George Strickland
Rev. Sidney Smith	*Professor Dalzell
*Rev. Peter Elmslie	*Lord Webb Seymour
*Alex. Irving (Lord Newton)	*Earl of Selkirk
*Wm. Erskine (Lord Kinnedder)	*Lord Glenbervie
George Cranstoun (Lord Corehouse)	1807 Rev. John Thomson
*Walter Scott	1810 John Jeffrey
Thomas Thomson	1811 T. F. Kennedy
Dr. John Thomson	J. Fullerton (Lord Fullerton)
John A. Murray (Lord Advocate in 1835)	John Allen
Henry Brougham (Lord Brougham)	*Francis Horner
*Henry Mackenzie	Thomas Campbell
H. Mackenzie (Lord Mackenzie)	1812 *George Wilson
*Malcolm Laing	1814 *Dr. John Gordon
Henry Cockburn (Lord Cockburn)	1816 Andrew Rutherford
John Richardson	1817 James Keay
Francis Jeffrey (Lord Jeffrey)	1825 Leonard Horner
William Clerk	Professor Pillans
	1826 Count M. de Flahault
	*D. Cathcart (Lord Alloway)
	1827 Earl of Minto
	William Murray
	1830 Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone

While these disagreeable affairs were still in progress, the poem of the Lady of the Lake was completed. Scott was at the same time arranging the materials, and superintending the printing, of the collection entitled "English Minstrelsy," in which several of his own minor poems first appeared, and which John Ballantyne and Co. also published in the summer of 1810. The Swift, too, (to say nothing of reviews and the like,) was going on; and so was the Somers. A new edition of the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border was moreover at press, and in it the editor included a few features of novelty, particularly Mr. Morritt's spirited ballad of the *Curse of Moy*. He gives a lively description of his occupations in the following letter addressed to that gentleman:—

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., 24 Portland Place, London.*

"Edinburgh, 2d March, 1810.

"My dear Morritt,

"You are very good to remember such a false knave as I am, who have omitted so long to thank you for a letter, bringing me the assurances of your health and remembrance, which I do not value the less deeply and sincerely for my seeming neglect. Truth is, I do not eat the bread of idleness. But I was born a Scotchman, and a bare one, and was therefore born to fight my way with my left hand where my right failed me, and with my teeth, if they were both cut off. This is but a bad apology for not answering your kindness, yet not so bad when you consider that it was only admitted as a cause of procrastination, and that I have been—let me see—I have been Secretary to the Judicature Commission, which sat daily during all the Christmas vacation. I have been editing Swift, and correcting the press, at the rate of six sheets a week. I have been editing Somers at the rate of four ditto ditto. I have written reviews—I have written songs—I have made selections—I have superintended rehearsals—and all this independent of visiting, and of my official duty, which occupies me four hours every working-day except Mondays—and independent of a new poem with which I am threatening the world. This last employment is not the most prudent, but I really cannot well help myself. My office, though a very good one for Scotland, is only held in reversion; nor do I at present derive a shilling from it. I must expect that a fresh favorite of the public will supersede me; and, my philosophy being very great on the point of poetical fame, I would fain, at the risk of hastening my own downfall, avail myself of the favorable moment to make some further pro-

vision for my little people. Moreover, I cannot otherwise honestly indulge myself in some of the luxuries, which, when long gratified, become a sort of pseudo necessaries. As for the terrible parodies * which have come forth, I can only say with Benedict, 'A college of such witmongers cannot flout me out of my humor.' Had I been conscious of one place about my temper, were it even, metaphorically speaking, the tip of my heel, vulnerable to this sort of aggression, I have that respect for mine own ease, that I would have shunned being a candidate for public applause, as I would avoid snatching a honeycomb from among a hive of live bees. My present attempt is a poem, partly Highland—the scene Loch Katrine, *tempore Jacobi Quinti.* If I fail, as Lady Macbeth gallantly says, I fail, and there is only a story murdered to no purpose; and if I succeed, why then, as the song says,

> 'Up with the bonnie blue bonnet,
> The dirk and the feather and a'.

"I hope to show this ditty to you soon in Portland Place, for it seems determined I must go to London, though the time is not fixed. The pleasure of meeting you and half a dozen other friends, reconciles me to this change of plan, for had I answered your letter the day I received it, I would have said nothing was less likely than my going to town in spring. I hope it will be so late as to afford me an opportunity of visiting Rokeby and Greta Side on my return. The *felon sow* herself could not think of them with more affection than I do; and though I love Portland Place dearly, yet I would fain enjoy both. But this must be as *the Fates and destinies and Sisters three* determine. Charlotte hopes to accompany me, and is particularly gratified by the expectation of meeting Mrs. Morritt. We think of our sunny days at Rokeby with equal delight.

"Miss Baillie's play went off capitally here, notwithstanding her fond and over-credulous belief in a Creator of the world. The fact is so generally believed that it is man who makes the deity, that I am surprised it has never been maintained as a corollary, that the knife and fork make the fingers. We wept till our hearts were sore, and applauded till our hands were blistered—what could we more?—and this in crowded theatres.

"I send a copy of the poetical collection, not for you, my good friend, because you would not pay your literary subscription,† but for Mrs. Morritt. I thought of leaving it as I came through York-

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* I suppose this is an allusion to the "Lay of the Scotch Fiddle," the "Goblin Groom," and some other productions, like them, long since forgotten.

† Scott alludes to some translations of Italian poetry which he had wished for Mr. Morritt's permission to publish in the "English Minstrelsy."

shire, but as I can get *as yet* an office frank, it will be safer in your charge. By a parity of reasoning, you will receive a copy of the new edition of the Minstrelsy just finished, and about to be shipped, enriched with your Curse of Moy, which is very much admired by all to whom I have shown it. I am sorry that dear —— —— is so far from you. There is something about her that makes me think of her with a mixture of affection and anxiety—such a pure and excellent heart, joined to such native and fascinating manners, cannot pass unprotected through your fashionable scenes without much hazard of a twinge at least, if not a stab. I remember we talked over this subject once while riding on the banks of Tees, and somehow (I cannot tell why) it falls like a death-bell on my ear. She is too artless for the people that she has to live amongst. This is all vile croaking, so I will end it by begging ten times love and compliments to Mrs. Morritt, in which Charlotte heartily joins. Believe me ever, dear Morritt, yours most faithfully,

WALTER SCOTT."

Early in May, the Lady of the Lake came out—as her two elder sisters had done—in all the majesty of quarto, with every accompanying grace of typography, and with, moreover, an engraved frontispiece of Saxon's portrait of Scott; the price of the book two guineas. For the copyright the poet had nominally received 2000 guineas, but as John Ballantyne and Co. retained three fourths of the property to themselves, (Miller of London purchasing the other fourth,) the author's profits were, or should have been, more than this.

It ought to be mentioned, that during the progress of the poem his feelings towards Constable were so much softened, that he authorized John Ballantyne to ask, in his name, that experienced bookseller's advice respecting the amount of the first impression, the method of advertising, and other professional details. Mr. Constable readily gave the assistance thus requested, and would willingly have taken any share they pleased in the adventure. The property had been disposed of before these communications occurred, and the triumphant success of the *coup d'essai* of the new firm was sufficient to close Scott's ears for a season against any propositions of the like kind from the house at the Cross; but from this time there was no return of any thing like personal

ill-will between the parties. One article of this correspondence will be sufficient.

"*To Mr. Constable.*

"Castle Street, 13th March, 1810.

"Dear Sir,

"I am sure if Mr. Hunter is really sorry for the occasion of my long absence from your shop, I shall be happy to forget all disagreeable circumstances, and visit it often as a customer and amateur. I think it necessary to add, before departing from this subject, and I hope forever, that it is not in my power to restore our relative situation as author and publishers, because, upon the breach between us, a large capital was diverted by the Ballantynes from another object, and invested in their present bookselling concern, under an express assurance from me of such support as my future publications could give them; which is a pledge not to be withdrawn without grounds which I cannot anticipate. But this is not a consideration which need prevent our being friends and well-wishers. Yours truly,

W. Scott."

Mr. Robert Cadell, the publisher of this Memoir, who was then a young man in training for his profession in Edinburgh, retains a strong impression of the interest which the Lady of the Lake excited there for two or three months before it was published.

"James Ballantyne," he says, "read the cantos from time to time to select coteries, as they advanced at press. Common fame was loud in their favor; a great poem was on all hands anticipated. I do not recollect that any of all the author's works was ever looked for with more intense anxiety, or that any one of them excited a more extraordinary sensation when it did appear. The whole country rang with the praises of the poet—crowds set off to view the scenery of Loch Katrine, till then comparatively unknown; and as the book came out just before the season for excursions, every house and inn in that neighborhood was crammed with a constant succession of visitors. It is a well-ascertained fact, that from the date of the publication of the Lady of the Lake the post-horse duty in Scotland rose in an extraordinary degree, and indeed it continued to do so regularly for a number of years, the author's succeeding works keeping up the enthusiasm for our scenery which he had thus originally created."

I owe to the same correspondent the following details:—

"The quarto edition of 2050 copies disappeared instantly, and was followed in the course of the same year by four editions in

octavo, viz. one of 3000, a second of 3250, and a third and a fourth each of 6000 copies; thus, in the space of a few months, the extraordinary number of 20,000 copies were disposed of. In the next year (1811) there was another edition of 3000; there was one of 2000 in 1814; another of 2000 in 1815; one of 2000 again in 1819; and two, making between them 2500, appeared in 1825: since which time the Lady of the Lake, in collective editions of his poetry, and in separate issues, must have circulated to the extent of at least 20,000 copies more."

So that, down to the month of July, 1836, the legitimate sale in Great Britain has been not less than 50,000 copies.

I have little to add to what the Introduction of 1830, and some letters already extracted, have told us, concerning the history of the composition of this poem. Indeed the coincidences of expression and illustration in the Introduction and those private letters, written twenty years before, are remarkable. In both we find him quoting Montrose's lines, and in both he quotes also "Up wi' the bonnie blue bonnet," &c. In truth, both letters and Introduction were literal transcripts of his usual conversation on the subject.

"A lady," he says, "to whom I was nearly related, and with whom I lived during her whole life on the most brotherly terms of affection, was residing with me (at Ashestiel) when the work was in progress, and used to ask me what I could possibly do to rise so early in the morning. At last I told her the subject of my meditations; and I can never forget the anxiety and affection expressed in her reply. 'Do not be so rash,' she said, 'my dearest cousin. You are already popular—more so perhaps than you yourself will believe, or than even I or other partial friends can fairly allow to your merit. You stand high—do not rashly attempt to climb higher and incur the risk of a fall; for, depend upon it, a favorite will not be permitted to stumble with impunity.' I replied to this affectionate expostulation in the words of Montrose:—

'He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all.'

'If I fail,' I said,—for the dialogue is strong in my recollection,—'it is a sign that I ought never to have succeeded, and *I will write prose for life*: you shall see no change in my temper, nor will I eat a single meal the worse. But if I succeed—

'Up wi' the bonnie blue bonnet,
The dirk and the feather an' a'!'

"Afterwards I showed my critic the first canto, which reconciled her to my imprudence."

The lady here alluded to was no doubt Miss Christian Rutherford, his mother's sister, who, as I have already mentioned, was so little above his age, that they seem always to have lived together on terms of equality indicated in her use of the word "cousin" in the dialogue before us.—She was, however, about as devout a Shakspearian as her nephew, and the use of *cousin*, for kinsman in general, is common to all our elder dramatists.*

He says, in the same essay—

"I remember that about the same time a friend started in to 'heeze up my hope,' like the minstrel in the old song. He was bred a farmer, but a man of powerful understanding, natural good taste, and warm poetical feeling, perfectly competent to supply the wants of an imperfect or irregular education. He was a passionate admirer of field sports, which we often pursued together. As this friend happened to dine with me at Ashestiel one day, I took the opportunity of reading to him the first canto of the Lady of the Lake, in order to ascertain the effect the poem was likely to produce upon a person who was but too favorable a representative of readers at large. His reception of my recitation, or prelection, was rather singular. He placed his hand across his brow, and listened with great attention through the whole account of the stag-hunt, till the dogs throw themselves into the lake to follow their master, who embarks with Ellen Douglas. He then started up with a sudden exclamation, struck his hand on the table, and declared in a voice of censure calculated for the occasion, that the dogs must have been totally ruined by being permitted to take the water after such a severe chase. I own I was much encouraged by the species of reverie which had possessed so zealous a follower of the sports of the ancient Nimrod, who had been completely surprised out of all doubts of the reality of the tale."

Scott adds—

"Another of his remarks gave me less pleasure. He detected the identity of the king with the wandering knight, Fitz-James, when he winds his bugle to summon his attendants. He was probably thinking of the lively but somewhat licentious old ballad

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* Thus Lady Capulet exclaims on seeing the corpse of Tybalt,—

"Tybalt, my cousin! oh! my brother's child!"

in which the *dénoument* of a royal intrigue" [one of James V. himself by the way] "takes place as follows:—

'He took the bugle from his side,
He blew both loud and shrill,
And four-and-twenty belted knights
Came skipping owre the hill.

'Then he took out a little knife,
Let a' his duddies fa',
And he was the bravest gentleman
That was amang them a'.
And we'll go no more a roving,' &c.

"This discovery, as Mr. Pepys says of the rent in his camlet cloak, 'was but a trifle, yet it troubled me;' and I was at a good deal of pains to efface any marks by which I thought my secret could be traced before the conclusion, when I relied on it with the same hope of producing effect with which the Irish postboy is said to reserve a 'trot for the avenue.'"*

I believe the shrewd critic here introduced was the poet's excellent cousin, Charles Scott, now laird of Knowe-south. The story of the Irish postilion's trot he owed to Mr. Moore.

In their reception of this poem, the critics were for once in full harmony with each other, and with the popular voice. The article in the Quarterly was written by George Ellis; but its eulogies, though less discriminative, are not a whit more emphatic than those of Mr. Jeffrey in the rival Review. Indeed, I have always considered this last paper as the best specimen of contemporary criticism on Scott's poetry; and I shall therefore indulge myself with quoting here two of its paragraphs:—

"There is nothing in Mr. Scott of the severe and majestic style of Milton—or of the terse and fine composition of Pope—or of the elaborate elegance and melody of Campbell—or even of the flowing and redundant diction of Southey,—but there is a medley of bright images and glowing, set carelessly and loosely together—a diction tinged successively with the careless richness of Shakspeare, the harshness and antique simplicity of the old romances, the homeliness of vulgar ballads and anecdotes, and the sentimental glitter of the most modern poetry—passing from the borders of the ludicrous to those of the sublime—alternately minute and energetic—sometimes artificial, and frequently negligent, but always full of spirit and vivacity—abounding in images that are

* Introduction to the Lady of the Lake—1830.

striking at first sight to minds of every contexture—and never expressing a sentiment which it can cost the most ordinary reader any exertion to comprehend. Upon the whole, we are inclined to think more highly of the Lady of the Lake than of either of the author's former publications. We are more sure, however, that it has fewer faults, than that it has greater beauties; and as its beauties bear a stronger resemblance to those with which the public has been already made familiar in these celebrated works, we should not be surprised if its popularity were less splendid and remarkable. For our own parts, however, we are of opinion, that it will be oftener read hereafter than either of them; and that if it had appeared first in the series, their reception would have been less favorable than that which it has experienced. It is more polished in its diction, and more regular in its versification; the story is constructed with infinitely more skill and address; there is a greater proportion of pleasing and tender passages, with much less antiquarian detail; and, upon the whole, a larger variety of characters, more artfully and judiciously contrasted. There is nothing so fine, perhaps, as the battle in Marmion—or so picturesque as some of the scattered sketches in the Lay; but there is a richness and a spirit in the whole piece which does not pervade either of those poems—a profusion of incident, and a shifting brilliancy of coloring, that reminds us of the witchery of Ariosto—and a constant elasticity, and occasional energy, which seem to belong more particularly to the author now before us."

"It is honorable to Mr. Scott's genius that he has been able to interest the public so deeply with this third presentment of the same chivalrous scenes; but we cannot help thinking, that both his glory and our gratification would have been greater, if he had changed his hand more completely, and actually given us a true Celtic story, with all its drapery and accompaniments, in a corresponding style of decoration. Such a subject, we are persuaded, has very great capabilities, and only wants to be introduced to public notice by such a hand as Mr. Scott's, to make a still more powerful impression than he has already effected by the resurrection of the tales of romance. There are few persons, we believe, in any degree of poetical susceptibility, who have wandered among the secluded valleys of the Highlands, and contemplated the singular people by whom they are still tenanted—with their love of music and of song—their hardy and irregular life, so unlike the unvarying toils of the Saxon mechanic—their devotion to their chiefs—their wild and lofty traditions—their national enthusiasm—the melancholy grandeur of the scenes they inhabit—and the multiplied superstitions which still linger among them—without feeling that there is no existing people so well adapted for the purposes of poetry, or so capable of furnishing the occasions of new and striking inventions.

"We are persuaded that if Mr. Scott's powerful and creative

genius were to be turned in good earnest to such a subject, something might be produced still more impressive and original than even this age has yet witnessed." *

The second of these paragraphs is a strikingly prophetic one; and if the details already given negative the prediction of the first,—namely, that the immediate popularity of the Lady of the Lake would be less remarkable than that of the Lay or Marmion had been,—its other prediction, that the new poem would be "oftener read hereafter than either of the former," has, I believe, proved just. The Lay, if I may venture to state the creed now established, is, I should say, generally considered as the most natural and original, Marmion the most powerful and splendid, the Lady of the Lake as the most interesting, romantic, picturesque, and graceful of his great poems.

Of the private opinions expressed at the time of its first publication by his distinguished literary friends, and expressed with an ease and candor equally honorable to them and to him, that of Mr. Southey was, as far as I know, the only one which called forth any thing like a critical reply; and even here, *more suo*, he seems glad to turn from his own productions to those of his correspondent. It will be seen that Mr. Southey had recently put forth the first volume of his History of Brazil; that his Kehama was then in the Ballantyne press; and that he had mentioned to Scott his purpose of writing another poem under the title of "Don Pelayo"—which in the issue was exchanged for that of "Roderick the Last of the Goths."

* It may interest the reader to compare with this passage a brief extract from Sir James Mackintosh's Indian Diary of 1811:—

"The subject of the Lady," says he, "is a common Highland irruption, but at a point where the neighborhood of the Lowlands affords the best contrast of manners—where the scenery affords the noblest subject of description—and where the wild clan is so near to the Court, that their robberies can be connected with the romantic adventures of a disguised king, an exiled lord, and a high-born beauty. The whole narrative is very fine. There are not so many splendid passages for quotation as in the two former poems. This may indeed silence the objections of the critics, but I doubt whether it will promote the popularity of the poem. It has nothing so good as the Address to Scotland, or the Death of Marmion."—*Life of Mackintosh*, vol. ii. p. 82

"*To Robert Southey, Esq., Durham.*

"Edinburgh, May 20, 1810.

"My dear Southey,

"I am very sensible of the value of your kind approbation of my efforts, and trust I shall, under such good auspices, keep my ground with the public. I have studied their taste as much as a thing so variable can be calculated upon, and I hope I have again given them an acceptable subject of entertainment. What you say of the songs is very just, and also of the measure. But, on the one hand, I wished to make a difference between my former poems and this new attempt, in the general tenor of versification, and on the other, having an eye to the benefits derivable from the change of stanza, I omitted no opportunity which could be given or taken of converting my dog-trot into a hop-step-and-jump. I am impatient to see Kehama; James Ballantyne, who has a good deal of tact, speaks very highly of the poetical fire and beauty which pervades it; and considering the success of Sir William Jones, I should think the Hindhu mythology would not revolt the common readers, for in that lies your only danger. As for Don Pelayo, it should be exquisite under your management; the subject is noble, the parties finely contrasted in manners, dress, religion, and all that the poet desires to bring into action; and your complete knowledge of every historian who has touched upon the period, promises the reader at once delight and instruction.

"Twenty times twenty thanks for the History of Brazil, which has been my amusement, and solace, and spring of instruction, for this month past. I have always made it my reading-book after dinner, between the removal of the cloth and our early tea-time. There is only one defect I can point out, and that applies to the publishers—I mean the want of a good map. For, to tell you the truth, with my imperfect atlas of South America, I can hardly trace these same *Tups* of yours, (which in our border dialect signifies *rams*,) with all their divisions and subdivisions, throughout so many ramifications, without a *carte de pays*. The history itself is most singularly entertaining, and throws new light upon a subject which we have hitherto understood very imperfectly. Your labor must have been immense, to judge from the number of curious facts quoted, and unheard-of authorities which you have collected. I have traced the achievements of the Portuguese adventurers with greater interest than I remember to have felt since, when, a school-boy, I first perused the duodecimo collection of Voyages and Discoveries called the World Displayed—a sensation which I thought had been long dead within me; for, to say the truth, the philanthropic and cautious conduct of modern discoverers, though far more amiable, is less entertaining than that of the old Bucaniers, and Spaniards and Portuguese, who went to conquer and achieve adventures, and met with strange chances of fate in consequence, which could never have befallen a well-armed boat's

crew, not trusting themselves beyond their watering-place, or trading with the natives on the principles of mercantile good faith.

"I have some thoughts of a journey and voyage to the Hebrides this year, but if I don't make that out, I think I shall make a foray into your northern counties, go to see my friend Morritt at Greta Bridge, and certainly cast myself Keswick-ways either going or coming. I have some literary projects to talk over with you, for the re-editing some of our ancient classical romances and poetry, and so forth. I have great command of our friends the Ballantynes, and I think, so far as the filthy lucre of gain is concerned, I could make a very advantageous bargain for the time which must necessarily be bestowed in such a labor, besides doing an agreeable thing for ourselves, and a useful service to literature. What is become of Coleridge's *Friend?* I hope he had a letter from me, enclosing my trifling subscription. How does our friend Wordsworth? I won't write to him, because he hates letter-writing as much as I do; but I often think of him, and always with affection. If you make any stay at Durham, let me know, as I wish you to know my friend Surtees of Mainsforth.* He is an excellent antiquary, some of the rust of which study has clung to his manners; but he is good-hearted, and you would make the *summer eve* (for so by the courtesy of the kalendar we must call these abominable easterly blighting afternoons) short between you. I presume you are with my friend Dr. Southey, who, I hope, has not quite forgotten me, in which faith I beg kind compliments to him, and am ever yours most truly,

WALTER SCOTT."

George Ellis having undertaken, at Gifford's request, to review the Lady of the Lake, does not appear to have addressed any letter to the poet upon the subject, until after his article had appeared. He then says simply, that he had therein expressed his candid sentiments, and hoped his friend, as great a worshipper as himself of Dryden's tales, would take in good part his remarks on the octosyllabic metre as applied to serious continued narrative. The following was Scott's reply:—

"*To G. Ellis, Esq.*

"My dear Ellis,

"I have been scandalously lazy in answering your kind epistle, received I don't know how long since; but then I had been

* This amiable gentleman, author of the History of Durham, in three volumes folio,—one of the most learned as well as most interesting works of its class,—was an early and dear friend of Scott's. He died at the family seat of Mainsforth, near Durham, 11th February, 1834, in his 55th year.

long your creditor, and I fancy correspondents, like merchants, are often glad to plead their friends' neglect of their account-current as an apology for their own, especially when they know that the value of the payments being adjusted, must leave a sad balance against them. I have run up an attempt on the Curse of Kehama for the Quarterly; a strange thing it is—the Curse, I mean—and the critique is not, as the blackguards say, worth a damn; but what I could I did, which was to throw as much weight as possible upon the beautiful passages, of which there are many, and to slur over the absurdities, of which there are not a few. It is infinite pity of Southey, with genius almost to exuberance, so much learning and real good feeling of poetry, that, with the true obstinacy of a foolish papa, he *will* be most attached to the defects of his poetical offspring. This said Kehama affords cruel openings for the quizzers, and I suppose will get it roundly in the Edinburgh Review. I would have made a very different hand of it indeed, had the order of the day been *pour déchirer*.*

"I told you how much I was delighted with your critique on the Lady; but, very likely moved by the same feeling for which I have just censured Southey, I am still inclined to defend the eight-syllable stanza, which I have somehow persuaded myself is more congenial to the English language—more favorable to narrative poetry at least—than that which has been commonly termed heroic verse. If you will take the trouble to read a page of Pope's Iliad, you will probably find a good many lines out of which two syllables may be struck without injury to the sense. The first lines of this translation have been repeatedly noticed as capable of being cut down from ships of the line into frigates, by striking out the two said-syllabled words, as—

> 'Achilles' wrath to Greece, the *direful* spring
> Of woes unnumbered, *heavenly* goddess sing—
> That wrath which sent to Pluto's *gloomy* reign
> The souls of *mighty* chiefs in battle slain,
> Whose bones, unburied, on the *desert* shore,
> Devouring dogs and *hungry* vultures tore.'

"Now, since it is true that by throwing out the epithets underscored, we preserve the sense without diminishing the force of the verses—and since it is also true that scarcely one of the epithets are more than merely expletive—I do really think that the structure of verse which requires least of this sort of bolstering, is most likely to be forcible and animated. The case is different in descriptive poetry, because there epithets, if they are happily selected, are rather to be sought after than avoided, and admit of being varied *ad infinitum*. But if in narrative you are frequently com-

* See this article in his Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. xvii. pp. 301–337

pelled to tag your substantives with adjectives, it must frequently happen that you are forced upon those that are merely commonplaces, such as '*heavenly* goddess,' '*desert* shore,' and so forth; and I need not tell you, that whenever any syllable is obviously inserted for the completion of a couplet, the reader is disposed to quarrel with it. Besides, the eight-syllable stanza is capable of certain varieties denied to the heroic. Double rhymes, for instance, are congenial to it, which often give a sort of Gothic richness to its cadences; you may also render it more or less rapid by retaining or dropping an occasional syllable. Lastly, and which I think its principal merit, it runs better into sentences than any length of line I know, as it corresponds, upon an average view of our punctuation, very commonly with the proper and usual space between comma and comma. Lastly the Second—and which ought perhaps to have been said first,—I think I have somehow a better knack at this 'false gallop' of verse, as Touchstone calls it, than at your more legitimate hexameters; and so there is the short and long of my longs and shorts. Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

Mr. Ellis recurs to the octosyllabic measure of the Lady of the Lake in his next letter.

"I don't think," says he, "after all the eloquence with which you plead for your favorite metre, that you really like it from any other motive than that *sainte paresse*—that delightful indolence—which induces one to delight in doing those things which we can do with the least fatigue. If you will take the trouble of converting Dryden's Theodore and Honoria (a narrative, is it not?) into Hudibrastic measure, and, after trying this on the first twenty lines, you feel pleased with the transformation, I will give up the argument; although, in point of fact, I believe that I regret the *variety* of your own old stanza, much more than the absence of that heroic measure, which you justly remark is not, without great difficulty, capable of being moulded into sentences of various lengths. When, therefore, you give us another poem, pray indulge me with rather a larger share of your ancient dithyrambics."

Canning, too, came to the side of Ellis in this debate. After telling Scott that, "on a repeated perusal," he had been "more and more delighted" with the Lady of the Lake, he says—"But I *should* like to see something a little different when you write next. In short, I have sometimes thought (very presumptuously) that partly by persuasion, and partly by showing the effect of a change of dress—of a fuller and more sweeping style—upon some of your

favorite passages, I could induce you to present yourself next time in a Drydenic habit. Has this ever occurred to you, and have you tried it, and not liked yourself so well?" We shall see by and by what attention Scott gave to these friendly suggestions.

Of the success of the new poem he speaks as follows in his Introduction of 1830:—

"It was certainly so extraordinary as to induce me for the moment to conclude that I had at last fixed a nail in the proverbially inconstant wheel of Fortune. I had attained, perhaps, that degree of public reputation at which prudence, or certainly timidity, would have made a halt, and discontinued efforts by which I was far more likely to diminish my fame than to increase it. But—as the celebrated John Wilkes is said to have explained to King George the Third, that he himself, amid his full tide of popularity, was never a Wilkite—so I can with honest truth exculpate myself from having been at any time a partisan of my own poetry, even when it was in the highest fashion with the million. It must not be supposed that I was either so ungrateful, or so superabundantly candid, as to despise or scorn the value of those whose voice had elevated me so much higher than my own opinion told me I deserved. I felt, on the contrary, the more grateful to the public, as receiving that from partiality which I could not have claimed from merit; and I endeavored to deserve the partiality by continuing such exertions as I was capable of for their amusement."

James Ballantyne has preserved in his *Memorandum* an anecdote strikingly confirmative of the most remarkable statement in this page of Scott's confessions.

"I remember," he says, "going into his library shortly after the publication of the Lady of the Lake, and finding Miss Scott (who was then a very young girl) there by herself. I asked her, 'Well, Miss Sophia, how do you like the Lady of the Lake?' Her answer was given with perfect simplicity—'Oh, I have not read it; papa says there's nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry.'"

In fact, his children in those days had no idea of the source of his distinction—or rather, indeed, that his position was in any respect different from that of other Advocates, Sheriffs, and Clerks of Session. The eldest boy came home one afternoon about this time from the High School, with tears and blood hardened together upon his

cheeks. "Well, Wat," said his father, "what have you been fighting about to-day?" With that the boy blushed and hung his head, and at last stammered out—that "he had been called *a lassie*." "Indeed!" said Mrs. Scott, "this was a terrible mischief, to be sure." "You may say what you please, mamma," Wat answered roughly, "but I dinna think there's a *waufer* (shabbier) thing in the world than to be a lassie, to sit boring at a clout." Upon further inquiry, it turned out that one or two of his companions had dubbed him *The Lady of the Lake;* and the phrase was to him incomprehensible, save as conveying some imputation on his prowess, which he accordingly vindicated in the usual style of the Yards. Of the poem he had never before heard. Shortly after, this story having got wind, one of Scott's colleagues of the Clerk's Table said to the boy—"Gilnockie, my man, you cannot surely help seeing that great people make more work about your papa than they do about me or any other of your *uncles*—what is it, do you suppose, that occasions this?" The little fellow pondered for a minute or two, and then answered very gravely —"It's commonly *him* that sees the hare sitting." And yet this was the man that had his children all along so very much with him. In truth, however, young Walter had guessed pretty shrewdly in the matter; for his father had all the tact of the Sutherland Highlander, whose detection of an Irish rebel up to the neck in a bog, he has commemorated in a note upon Rokeby. Like him, he was quick to catch the *sparkle* of the future victim's eye; and often said jestingly of himself, that whatever might be thought of him as a *maker*, (poet,) he was an excellent *trouveur*.

Ballantyne adds:—

"One day, about this same time, when his fame was supposed to have reached its acmé, I said to him—'Will you excuse me, Mr. Scott, but I should like to ask you what you think of your own genius as a poet, in comparison with that of Burns?' He replied —'There is no comparison whatever—we ought not to be named in the same day.' 'Indeed!' I answered; 'would you compare Campbell to Burns?' 'No, James, not at all—If you wish to speak of a real poet, Joanna Baillie is now the highest genius of our country.'—But in fact," continues Ballantyne, "he had often

said to me that neither his own nor any modern popular style of composition was that from which he derived most pleasure. I asked him what it was. He answered—Johnson's; and that he had more pleasure in reading *London*, and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, than any other poetical composition he could mention; and I think I never saw his countenance more indicative of high admiration than while reciting aloud from those productions."*

CHAPTER X.

FIRST VISIT TO THE HEBRIDES — STAFFA — SKYE — MULL — IONA, ETC. — THE LORD OF THE ISLES PROJECTED — LETTERS TO JOANNA BAILLIE — SOUTHEY — AND MORRITT. — 1810.

WALTER SCOTT was at this epoch in the highest spirits, and having strong reasons of various kinds for his resolution to avail himself of the gale of favor, only hesitated in which quarter to explore the materials of some new romance. His first and most earnest desire was to spend a few months with the British army in the Peninsula, but this he soon resigned, from an amiable motive, which a letter presently to be quoted will explain. He then thought of

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* In his sketch of Johnson's Life, (Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. iii. p. 264,) Scott says—"The deep and pathetic morality of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* has often extracted tears from those whose eyes wander dry over pages professedly sentimental." And Lord Byron, in his Ravenna Diary, (1821,) has the following entry on the same subject:—"Read Johnson's Vanity of Human Wishes,—all the examples and mode of giving them sublime, as well as the latter part, with the exception of an occasional couplet. 'Tis a grand poem—and so *true!*—true as the 10th of Juvenal himself. The lapse of ages changes all things—time—language—the earth—the bounds of the sea—the stars of the sky, and every thing about, around, and underneath man, except man himself, who has always been, and always will be, an unlucky rascal. The infinite variety of lives conduct but to death, and the infinity of wishes lead but to disappointment."—(*Life and Works*, vol. v. p. 66.) Yet it is the cant of our day, above all, of its poetasters, that Johnson was no poet. To be sure, they say the same of Pope—and hint it occasionally even of Dryden.

revisiting Rokeby—for he had, from the first day that he spent on that magnificent domain, contemplated it as the scenery of a future poem. But the burst of enthusiasm which followed the appearance of the Lady of the Lake finally swayed him to undertake a journey, deeper than he had as yet gone, into the *Highlands;* and a warm invitation from the Laird of Staffa,* a brother of his friend and colleague, Mr. Macdonald Buchanan, easily induced him to add a voyage to the *Hebrides.* He was accompanied by part of his family, (not forgetting his dog Wallace,) and by several friends besides; among others his relation Mrs. Apreece, (now Lady Davy,) who had been, as he says in one of his letters, "a lioness of the first magnitude in Edinburgh," during the preceding winter. He travelled slowly, with his own horses, through Argyllshire, as far as Oban; but, indeed, even where post-horses might have been had, this was the mode he always preferred in these family excursions; for he delighted in the liberty it afforded him of alighting and lingering as often and as long as he chose: and, in truth, he often performed the far greater part of the day's journey on foot—examining the map in the morning so as to make himself master of the bearings—and following his own fancy over some old disused riding track, or along the margin of a stream, while the carriage, with its female occupants, adhered to the proper road. At Oban, where they took to the sea, Mrs. Apreece met him by appointment.

He seems to have kept no journal during this expedition; but I shall string together some letters which, with the notes that he contributed many years afterwards to Mr. Croker's Edition of Boswell, may furnish a tolerable sketch of the insular part of his progress, and of the feelings with which he first inspected the localities of his last great poem—The Lord of the Isles. The first of these letters is

* The reader will find a warm tribute to Staffa's character as a Highland landlord, in Scott's article on Sir John Carr's Caledonian Sketches,—Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. xix.; and some spirited verses, written at his mansion of Ulva, in Scott's Poetical Works, edition 1834, vol. x. p. 356.

dated from the Hebridean residence of the young Laird of Staffa, now Sir Reginald Macdonald Steuart Seton of Staffa, Allanton, and Touch, Baronet.

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

"Ulva House, July 19, 1810.

"I cannot, my dear Miss Baillie, resist the temptation of writing to you from scenes which you have rendered classical as well as immortal. We, which in the present case means my wife, my eldest girl, and myself, are thus far in fortunate accomplishment of a pilgrimage to the Hebrides. The day before yesterday we passed the Lady's Rock, in the Sound of Mull, so near that I could almost have touched it. This is, you know, the Rock of your *Family Legend.* The boat, by my desire, went as near as prudence permitted; and I wished to have picked a relic from it, were it but a cockle-shell or a muscle, to have sent to you; but a spring tide was running with such force and velocity as to make the thing impossible. About two miles farther, we passed under the Castle of Duart, the seat of Maclean, consisting of one huge (indeed immense) square tower, in ruins, and additional turrets and castellated buildings, (the work, doubtless, of Benlora's guardianship,) on which the roof still moulders. It overhangs the strait channel from a lofty rock, without a single tree in the vicinity, and is surrounded by high and barren mountains, forming altogether as wild and dreary a scene as I ever beheld. Duart is confronted by the opposite castles of Dunstaffnage, Dunolly, Ardtornish, and others, all once the abodes of grim feudal chiefs, who warred incessantly with each other. I think I counted seven of these fortresses in sight at once, and heard seven times seven legends of war and wonder connected with them. We landed late, wet and cold, on the Island of Mull, near another old castle called Aros, separated, too, from our clothes, which were in a large wherry, which could not keep pace with our row-boat. Mr. Macdonald of Staffa, my kind friend and guide, had sent his piper (a constant attendant, mark that!) to rouse a Highland gentleman's family in the neighborhood, where we were received with a profusion of kindness and hospitality. Why should I appall you with a description of our difficulties and distresses—how Charlotte lost her shoes, and little Sophia her whole collection of pebbles—how I was divorced from my razors, and the whole party looked like a Jewish sanhedrim? By this time we were accumulated as follows:—Sir George Paul, the great philanthropist, Mrs. Apreece, a distant relation of mine, Hannah Mackenzie, a daughter of our friend Henry, and Mackinnon of Mackinnon, a young gentleman, born and bred in England, but nevertheless a Highland chief.* It

* William Alexander Mackinnon, Esq., now member of Parliament for Lymington, Hants.

seems his father had acquired wealth, and this young man, who now visits the Highlands for the first time, is anxious to buy back some of the family property which was sold long since. Some twenty Mackinnons, who happened to live within hearing of our arrival, (that is, I suppose, within ten miles of Aros,) came posting to see their young chief, who behaved with great kindness, and propriety, and liberality. Next day we rode across the isle on Highland ponies, attended by a numerous retinue of gillies, and arrived at the head of the salt-water loch, called Loch an Gaoil, where Staffa's boats awaited us with colors flying and pipes playing. We proceeded in state to this lonely isle, where our honored lord has a very comfortable residence, and were received by a discharge of swivels and musketry from his people.

"Yesterday we visited Staffa and Iona: the former is one of the most extraordinary places I ever beheld. It exceeded, in my mind, every description I had heard of it; or, rather, the appearance of the cavern, composed entirely of basaltic pillars as high as the roof of a cathedral,* and running deep into the rock, eternally swept by a deep and swelling sea, and paved as it were with ruddy marble, baffles all description. You can walk along the broken pillars, with some difficulty, and in some places with a little danger, as far as the farthest extremity. Boats also can come in below when the sea is placid,—which is seldom the case. I had become a sort of favorite with the Hebridean boatmen, I suppose from my anxiety about their old customs, and they were much pleased to see me get over the obstacles which stopped some of the party. So they took the whim of solemnly christening a great stone seat at the mouth of the cavern, Clachan an Bairdh, or the Poet's Stone. It was consecrated with a pibroch, which the echoes rendered tremendous, and a glass of whisky, not poured

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* "——— that wondrous dome,
Where, as to shame the temples decked
By skill of earthly architect,
Nature herself, it seemed, would raise
A minster to her Maker's praise!
Not for a meaner use ascend
Her columns, or her arches bend;
Nor of a theme less solemn tells
That mighty surge that ebbs and swells,
And still, between each awful pause
From the high vault an answer draws,
In varied tone prolonged and high,
That mocks the organ's melody.
Nor doth its entrance front in vain
To old Iona's holy fane,
That Nature's voice might seem to say,
'Well hast thou done, frail Child of clay!
Thy humble powers that stately shrine
Tasked high and hard—but witness mine!'"

Lord of the Isles, Canto IV., St. 10.

forth in the ancient mode of libation, but turned over the throats of the assistants. The head boatman, whose father had been himself a bard, made me a speech on the occasion; but as it was in Gaelic, I could only receive it as a silly beauty does a fine-spun compliment—bow, and say nothing.

"When this fun was over, (in which, strange as it may seem, the men were quite serious,) we went to Iona, where there are some ancient and curious monuments. From this remote island the light of Christianity shone forth on Scotland and Ireland. The ruins are of a rude architecture, but curious to the antiquary. Our return was less comfortable; we had to row twenty miles against an Atlantic tide and some wind, besides the pleasure of seeing occasional squalls gathering to windward. The ladies were sick, especially poor Hannah Mackenzie, and none of the gentlemen escaped except Staffa and myself. The men, however, cheered by the pipes, and by their own interesting boat-songs, which were uncommonly wild and beautiful, one man leading and the others answering in chorus, kept pulling away without apparently the least sense of fatigue, and we reached Ulva at ten at night, tolerably wet, and well disposed for bed.

"Our friend Staffa is himself an excellent specimen of Highland chieftainship; he is a cadet of Clanronald, and lord of a cluster of isles on the western side of Mull, and a large estate (in extent at least) on that island. By dint of minute attention to this property, and particularly to the management of his kelp, he has at once trebled his income and doubled his population, while emigration is going on all around him. But he is very attentive to his people, who are distractedly fond of him, and has them under such regulations as conduce both to his own benefit and their profit; and keeps a certain sort of rude state and hospitality, in which they take much pride. I am quite satisfied that nothing under the personal attention of the landlord himself will satisfy a Highland tenantry, and that the substitution of factors, which is now becoming general, is one great cause of emigration. This mode of life has, however, its evils; and I can see them in this excellent man. The habit of solitary power is dangerous even to the best-regulated minds, and this ardent and enthusiastic young man has not escaped the prejudices incident to his situation. But I think I have be stowed enough of my tediousness upon you. To ballast my letter, I put in one of the hallowed green pebbles from the shore of St. Columba—put it into your work-basket until we meet, when you will give me some account of its virtues. Don't suppose the lapidaries can give you any information about it, for in their profane eyes it is good for nothing. But the piper is sounding to breakfast; so no more (excepting love to Miss Agnes, Dr., and Mrs. Baillie) from your truly affectionate

WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S.—I am told by the learned, the pebble will wear its way out of the letter, so I will keep it till I get to Edinburgh. I must

not omit to mention that all through these islands I have found every person familiarly acquainted with the Family Legend, and great admirers."

It would be idle to extract many of Scott's notes on Boswell's Hebridean Journal; but the following specimens appear too characteristic to be omitted. Of the island Inchkenneth, where Johnson was received by the head of the clan M'Lean, he says:—

"Inchkenneth is a most beautiful little islet of the most verdant green, while all the neighboring shore of Greban, as well as the large islands of Colonsay and Ulva, are as black as heath and moss can make them. But Ulva has a good anchorage, and Inchkenneth is surrounded by shoals. It is now uninhabited. The ruins of the huts, in which Dr. Johnson was received by Sir Allan M'Lean, were still to be seen, and some tatters of the paper-hangings were to be seen on the walls. Sir George Onesiphorus Paul was at Inchkenneth with the same party of which I was a member. He seemed to me to suspect many of the Highland tales which he heard, but he showed most incredulity on the subject of Johnson's having been entertained in the wretched huts of which we saw the ruins. He took me aside, and conjured me to tell him the truth of the matter. 'This Sir Allan,' said he, 'was he a *regular baronet*, or was his title such a traditional one as you find in Ireland?' I assured my excellent acquaintance that, 'for my own part, I would have paid more respect to a Knight of Kerry, or Knight of Glynn; yet Sir Allan M'Lean was a *regular baronet* by patent:' and, having given him this information, I took the liberty of asking him, in return, whether he would not in conscience prefer the worst cell in the jail at Gloucester (which he had been very active in overlooking while the building was going on) to those exposed hovels where Johnson had been entertained by rank and beauty. He looked round the little islet, and allowed Sir Allan had some advantage in exercising ground; but in other respects he thought the compulsory tenants of Gloucester had greatly the advantage. Such was his opinion of a place, concerning which Johnson has recorded that 'it wanted little which palaces could afford.'

"Sir Allan M'Lean, like many Highland chiefs, was embarrassed in his private affairs, and exposed to unpleasant solicitations from attorneys, called, in Scotland, *Writers*, (which, indeed, was the chief motive of his retiring to Inchkenneth.) Upon one occasion he made a visit to a friend, then residing at Carron Lodge, on the banks of the Carron, where the banks of that river are studded with pretty villas. Sir Allan, admiring the landscape, asked his friend whom that handsome seat belonged to. 'M——, the Writer to the Signet,' was the reply. 'Umph!' said Sir Allan, but

not with an accent of assent, 'I mean that other house.' 'Oh! that belongs to a very honest fellow, Jamie ——, also a Writer to the Signet.'—'Umph!' said the Highland chief of M'Lean, with more emphasis than before.—'And yon smaller house?'—'That belongs to a Stirling man; I forget his name, but I am sure he is a Writer too; for'—— Sir Allan, who had recoiled a quarter of a circle backward at every response, now wheeled the circle entire, and turned his back on the landscape, saying, 'My good friend, I must own you have a pretty situation here, but d—n your neighborhood.'"

The following notices of Boswell himself, and his father, Lord Auchinleck, may be taken as literal transcripts from Scott's Table-Talk:—

"Boswell himself was callous to the *contacts* of Dr. Johnson, and when telling them, always reminds one of a jockey receiving a kick from the horse which he is showing off to a customer, and is grinning with pain while he is trying to cry out, 'Pretty rogue—no vice—all fun.' To him Johnson's rudeness was only '*pretty Fanny's way*.' Dr. Robertson had a sense of good breeding, which inclined him rather to forego the benefit of Johnson's conversation than awaken his rudeness.

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"Old Lord Auchinleck was an able lawyer, a good scholar, after the manner of Scotland, and highly valued his own advantages as a man of good estate and ancient family; and, moreover, he was a strict Presbyterian and Whig of the old Scottish cast. This did not prevent his being a terribly proud aristocrat; and great was the contempt he entertained and expressed for his son James, for the nature of his friendship, and the character of the personages of whom he was *engoué* one after another. 'There's nae hope for Jamie, mon,' he said to a friend. 'Jamie has gane clean gyte. What do you think, mon? He's done wi' Paoli—he's off wi' the landlouping scoundrel of a Corsican; and whose tail do you think he has pinned himself to now, mon?' Here the old judge summoned up a sneer of the most sovereign contempt. 'A *dominie*, mon—an auld dominie! he keeped a schule, and caud it an *acaadamy*.' Probably if this had been reported to Johnson, he would have felt it most galling, for he never much liked to think of that period of his life; it would have aggravated his dislike of Lord Auchinleck's Whiggery and Presbyterianism. These the old Lord carried to such an unusual height, that once, when a country man came in to state some justice business, and being required to make his oath, declined to do so before his Lordship, because he was not a *covenanted* magistrate—'Is that a' your objection, mon?' said the judge; 'come your ways in here, and we'll baith of us tak' the solemn league and covenant together.'

The oath was accordingly agreed and sworn to by both, and I dare say it was the last time it ever received such homage. It may be surmised how far Lord Auchinleck, such as he is here described, was likely to suit a high Tory and Episcopalian like Johnson. As they approached Auchinleck, Boswell conjured Johnson by all the ties of regard, and in requital of the services he had rendered him upon his tour, that he would spare two subjects in tenderness to his father's prejudices; the first related to Sir John Pringle, President of the Royal Society, about whom there was then some dispute current; the second concerned the general question of Whig and Tory. Sir John Pringle, as Boswell says, escaped; but the controversy between Tory and Covenanter raged with great fury, and ended in Johnson's pressing upon the old judge the question, what good Cromwell, of whom he had said something derogatory, had ever done to his country; when, after being much tortured, Lord Auchinleck at last spoke out, 'God! doctor, he gart kings ken that they had a *lith* in their neck'—he taught kings they had a *joint* in their necks. Jamie then set to meditating between his father and the philosopher, and availing himself of the judge's sense of hospitality, which was punctilious, reduced the debate to more order."

The following letter, dated Ashestiel, August 9, appears to have been written immediately on Scott's return from this expedition.

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby Park.*

"My dear Morritt,

"Your letter reached me in the very centre of the Isle of Mull, from which circumstance you will perceive how vain it was for me even to attempt availing myself of your kind invitation to Rokeby, which would otherwise have given us so much pleasure. We deeply regretted the absence of our kind and accomplished friends, the Clephanes, yet, *entre nous*, as we were upon a visit to a family of the Capulets, I do not know but we may pay our respects to them more pleasantly at another time. There subsist some aching scars of the old wounds which were in former times inflicted upon each other by the rival tribes of M'Lean and Macdonald, and my very good friends the Laird of Staffa and Mrs. M'Lean Clephane are both too true Highlanders to be without the characteristic prejudices of their clans, which, in their case, divide two highly accomplished and most estimable families, living almost within sight of each other, and on an island where polished conversation cannot be supposed to abound.

"I was delighted, on the whole, with my excursion. The weather was most excellent, during the whole time of our wanderings; and I need not tell you of Highland hospitality. The cavern at Staffa, and indeed the island itself, *dont on parle en histoire*, is one of the few *lions* which completely maintain an extended reputation

I do not know whether its extreme resemblance to a work of art, from the perfect regularity of the columns, or the grandeur of its dimensions, far exceeding the works of human industry, joined to a certain ruggedness and magnificent irregularity, by which nature vindicates her handiwork, are most forcibly impressed upon my memory. We also saw the far-famed Island of Columba, where there are many monuments of singular curiosity, forming a strange contrast to the squalid and dejected poverty of the present inhabitants of the isle. We accomplished both these objects in one day, but our return, though we had no alarms to boast of, was fatiguing to the ladies, and the sea, not affording us quite such a smooth passage as we had upon the Thames, (that morning we heard the voice of Lysons setting forth the contents of the records in the White Tower,) did, as one may say, excite a combustion in the stomachs of some of our party. Mine, being a stanch anti-revolutionist, was no otherwise troublesome than by demanding frequent supplies of cold beef and biscuit. Mrs. Apreece was of our party. Also

> —Sir George Paul, for prison-house renowned,
> A wandering knight, on high adventures bound.

—We left this celebrated philanthropist in a plight not unlike some of the misadventures of 'him of the sorrowful figure.' The worthy baronet was mounted on a quadruped which the owners called a pony, with his woful valet on another, and travelling slowly along the coast of Mull, in order to detect the point which approached nearest to the continent, protesting he would not again put foot in a boat, till he had discovered the shortest possible traject. Our separation reminded me of the disastrous incident in Byron's shipwreck, when they were forced to abandon two of their crew on an unknown coast, and beheld them at a distance commencing their solitary peregrination along the cliffs.

WALTER SCOTT."

The Iona pebble, mentioned in Scott's letter from Ulva, being set in a brooch of the form of a harp, was sent to Joanna Baillie some months later; but it may be as well to insert here the letter which accompanied it. The young friend, to whose return from a trip to the seat of war in the Peninsula it alludes, was John Miller, Esq., then practising at the Scotch bar, but now an eminent King's counsel of Lincoln's Inn.

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.*

"Edinburgh, Nov. 23, 1810.

"I should not have been so long your debtor, my dear Miss Baillie, for your kind and valued letter, had not the false knave,

at whose magic touch the Iona pebbles were to assume a shape in some degree appropriate to the person to whom they are destined, delayed finishing his task. I hope you will set some value upon this little trumpery brooch, because it is a harp, and a Scotch harp, and set with Iona stones. This last circumstance is more valuable, if ancient tales be true, than can be ascertained from the reports of dull modern lapidaries. These green stones, blessed of St. Columba, have a virtue, saith old Martin, to gratify each of them a single wish of the wearer. I believe, that which is most frequently formed by those who gather them upon the shores of the Saint, is for a fair wind to transport them from his domains. Now, after this, you must suppose every thing respecting this said harp sacred and hallowed. The very inscription is, you will please to observe, in the ancient Celtic language and character, and has a very talismanic look. I hope that upon you it will have the effect of a conjuration, for the words *Buail a'n Teud* signify *Strike the String;* and thus having, like the pedlers who deal in like matters of value, exhausted all my eloquence in setting forth the excellent outward qualities and mysterious virtues of my little keepsake, I have only to add, in homely phrase, God give you joy to wear it. I am delighted with the account of your brother's sylvan empire in Glo'stershire. The planting and cultivation of trees always seemed to me the most interesting occupation of the country. I cannot enter into the spirit of common vulgar farming, though I am doomed to carry on, in a small extent, that losing trade. It never occurred to me to be a bit more happy because my turnips were better than my neighbors'; and as for *grieving* my shearers, as we very emphatically term it in Scotland, I am always too happy to get out of the way, that I may hear them laughing at a distance when on the harvest rigg.

> 'So every servant takes his course,
> And, bad at first, they all grow worse'—

I mean for the purposes of agriculture,—for my hind shall kill a salmon, and my ploughboy find a hare sitting, with any man in the forest. But planting and pruning trees I could work at from morning till night; and if ever my poetical revenues enable me to have a few acres of my own, that is one of the principal pleasures I look forward to. There is, too, a sort of self-congratulation, a little tickling self-flattery in the idea that, while you are pleasing and amusing yourself, you are seriously contributing to the future welfare of the country, and that your very acorn may send its future ribs of oak to future victories like Trafalgar.

"You have now, by my calculation, abandoned your extensive domains, and returned to your Hampstead villa, which, at this season of the year, though the lesser, will prove, from your neighborhood to good society, the more comfortable habitation of the two. Dr. Baillie's cares are transferred (I fear for some time) to a

charge still more important than the poor Princess.* I trust in God that his skill and that of his brethren may be of advantage to the poor King; for a Regency, from its unsettled and uncertain tenure, must in every country, but especially where parties run so high, be a lamentable business. I wonder that the consequences which have taken place had not occurred sooner, during the long and trying suspense in which his mind must have been held by the protracted lingering state of a beloved child.

"Your country neighbors interest me excessively. I was delighted with the man who remembered me, though he had forgotten Sancho Panza; but I am afraid my preëminence in his memory will not remain much longer than the worthy squire's government at Barataria. Meanwhile, the Lady of the Lake is likely to come to preferment in an unexpected manner, for two persons of no less eminence than Messrs. Martin and Reynolds, play carpenters in ordinary to Covent Garden, are employed in scrubbing, careening, and cutting her down into one of those new-fashioned sloops called a melo-drama, to be launched at the theatre; and my friend, Mr. H. Siddons, emulous of such a noble design, is at work on the same job here. It puts me in mind of the observation with which our parish smith accompanied his answer to an inquiry whom he had heard preach on Sunday. 'Mr. Such-a-one—O! sir, he made *neat work*,' thinking, doubtless, of turning off a horse-shoe handsomely. I think my worthy artisans will make neat work too before they have done with my unlucky materials—but, as Durandarte says in the cavern of Montesinos—'Patience, cousin, and shuffle the cards.' Jeffrey *was* the author of the critique in the Edinburgh; he sent it to me in the sheet with an apology for some things in that of Marmion which he said contained needless asperities; and, indeed, whatever I may think of the justice of some part of his criticism, I think his general tone is much softened in my behalf.

"You say nothing about the drama on Fear, for which you have chosen so admirable a subject, and which, I think, will be in your own most powerful manner. I hope you will have an eye to its being actually represented. Perhaps of all passions it is the most universally interesting; for although most part of an audience may have been in love once in their lives, and many engaged in the pursuits of ambition, and some perhaps have fostered deadly hate yet there will always be many in each case who cannot judge of the operations of these motives from personal experience; whereas, I will bet my life there is not a soul of them but has felt the impulse of fear, were it but, as the old tale goes, at snuffing a candle with his fingers. I believe I should have been able to communicate some personal anecdotes on the subject, had I been enabled

* The Princess Amelia—whose death was immediately followed by the hopeless malady of King George III

to accomplish a plan I have had much at heart this summer, namely, to take a peep at Lord Wellington and his merry men in Portugal; but I found the idea gave Mrs. Scott more distress than I am entitled to do for the mere gratification of my own curiosity. Not that there would have been any great danger,—for I could easily, as a non-combatant, have kept out of the way of the 'grinning honor' of my namesake, Sir Walter Blount, and I think I should have been overpaid for a little hardship and risk by the novelty of the scene. I could have got very good recommendations to Lord Wellington; and, I dare say, I should have picked up some curious materials for battle scenery. A friend of mine made the very expedition, and arriving at Oporto when our army was in retreat from the frontier, he was told of the difficulty and danger he might encounter in crossing the country to the southward, so as to join them on the march; nevertheless, he travelled on through a country totally deserted, unless when he met bands of fugitive peasantry flying they scarce knew whither, or the yet wilder groups of the Ordinanza, or *levy en masse*, who, fired with revenge or desire of plunder, had armed themselves to harass the French detached parties. At length in a low glen he heard, with feelings that may be easily conceived, the distant sound of a Highland bagpipe playing 'The Garb of Old Gaul,' and fell into the quarters of a Scotch regiment, where he was most courteously received by his countrymen, who assured 'his honor he was just come in time to see the pattle.' Accordingly, being a young man of spirit, and a volunteer sharpshooter, he got a rifle, joined the light corps, and next day witnessed the Battle of Busaco, of which he describes the carnage as being terrible. The narrative was very simply told, and conveyed, better than any I have seen, the impressions which such scenes are likely to make when they have the effect (I had almost said the charm) of novelty. I don't know why it is I never found a soldier could give me an idea of a battle. I believe their mind is too much upon the *tactique* to regard the picturesque, just as the lawyers care very little for an eloquent speech at the bar, if it does not show good doctrine. The technical phrases of the military art, too, are unfavorable to convey a description of the concomitant terror and desolation that attends an engagement; but enough of this bald, disjointed chat, from ever yours,

W. S."

There appeared in the London Courier of September 15, 1810, an article signed S. T. C., charging Scott with being a plagiarist, more especially from the works of the poet for whose initials this signature had no doubt been meant to pass. On reading this silly libel, Mr. Southey felt satisfied that Samuel Taylor Coleridge could have no concern in its manufacture: but as Scott was not so well

acquainted with Coleridge as himself, he lost no time in procuring his friend's indignant disavowal, and forwarding it to Ashestiel. Scott acknowledges this delicate attention as follows:—

"*To Robert Southey, Esq.*

"Ashestiel, Thursday.

"My dear Southey,

"Your letter, this morning received, released me from the very painful feeling, that a man of Mr. Coleridge's high talents, which I had always been among the first to appreciate as they deserve, had thought me worthy of the sort of public attack which appeared in the Courier of the 15th. The initials are so remarkable, and the trick so very impudent, that I was likely to be fairly duped by it, for which I have to request Mr. Coleridge's forgiveness. I believe attacks of any sort sit as light upon me as they can on any one. If I have had my share of them, it is one point, at least, in which I resemble greater poets—but I should not like to have them come from the hand of contemporary genius. A man, though he does not 'wear his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at,' would not willingly be stooped upon by a falcon. I am truly obliged to your friendship for so speedily relieving me from so painful a feeling. The hoax was probably designed to set two followers of literature by the ears, and I dare say will be followed up by something equally impudent. As for the imitations, I have not the least hesitation in saying to you, that I was unconscious at the time of appropriating the goods of others, although I have not the least doubt that several of the passages must have been running in my head. Had I meant to steal, I would have been more cautious to disfigure the stolen goods. In one or two instances the resemblance seems general and casual, and in one, I think, it was impossible I could practise plagiarism, as Ethwald, one of the poems quoted, was published *after* the Lay of the Last Minstrel. A witty rogue, the other day, who sent me a letter subscribed Detector, proved me guilty of stealing a passage from one of Vida's Latin poems which I had never seen or heard of; yet there was so strong a general resemblance, as fairly to authorize Detector's suspicion.

"I renounced my Greta excursion in consequence of having made instead a tour to the Highlands, particularly to the Isles. I wished for Wordsworth and you a hundred times. The scenery is quite different from that on the mainland—dark, savage and horrid, but occasionally magnificent in the highest degree. Staffa, in particular, merits well its far-famed reputation; it is a cathedral arch, scooped by the hand of nature, equal in dimensions and in regularity to the most magnificent aisle of a Gothic cathedral. The sea rolls up to the extremity in most tremendous majesty, and with a voice like ten thousand giants shouting at once. I visited Icolmkill also, where there are some curious monuments,

mouldering among the poorest and most naked wretches that I ever beheld. Affectionately yours,

W. Scott."

The "lines of Vida" which "Detector" had enclosed to Scott as the obvious original of the address to "Woman" in Marmion, closing with

> "When pain and anguish wring the brow,
> A ministering angel thou!

end as follows;—and it must be owned that, if Vida had really written them, a more extraordinary example of casual coincidence could never have been pointed out—

> "Cum dolor atque supercilio gravis imminet angor,
> Fungeris angelico sola ministerio!"

Detector's reference is "Vida *ad Eranen*, El. II. v. 21;" —but it is almost needless to add there are no such lines—and no piece bearing such a title in Vida's works. Detector was no doubt some young college wag, for his letter has a Cambridge post-mark.

CHAPTER XI.

LIFE OF MISS SEWARD—WAVERLEY RESUMED—BALLANTYNE'S CRITIQUE ON THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF THE NOVEL — WAVERLEY AGAIN LAID ASIDE — UNFORTUNATE SPECULATIONS OF JOHN BALLANTYNE AND CO.; HISTORY OF THE CULDEES — TIXALL POETRY; BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER—EDINBURGH ANNUAL REGISTER, ETC. — SCOTT'S ESSAY ON JUDICIAL REFORM — HIS SCHEME OF GOING TO INDIA — LETTERS ON THE WAR IN THE PENINSULA — DEATH OF LORD PRESIDENT BLAIR — AND OF LORD MELVILLE — PUBLICATION OF THE VISION OF DON RODERICK — THE INFERNO OF ALTESIDORA, ETC. — 1810–1811.

In the course of this autumn appeared the Poetical Works of Miss Seward, in three volumes 12mo, with a Prefatory Memoir of her Life by Scott. This edition had, as we have seen, been enjoined by her last will—but his

part in it was an ungrateful one, and the book was among the most unfortunate that James Ballantyne printed, and his brother published, in deference to the personal feelings of their partner. He had been, as was natural, pleased and flattered by the attentions of the Lichfield poetess in the days of his early aspirations after literary distinction; but her verses, which he had with his usual readiness praised to herself beyond their worth, appeared when collected a formidable monument of mediocrity. Her Correspondence, published at the same time by Constable, was considered by him with still greater aversion. He requested the bookseller to allow him to look over the MS., and draw his pen through passages in which her allusions to letters of his own might compromise him as a critic on his poetical contemporaries. To this request Constable handsomely acceded, although it was evident that he thus deprived the collection of its best chance of popularity. I see, on comparing her letters, as they originally reached Scott, with the printed copies, that he had also struck out many of her most extravagant rhapsodies about himself and his works. No collection of this kind, after all, can be wholly without value; I have already drawn from it some sufficiently interesting fragments, as the biographers of other eminent authors of this time will probably do hereafter under the like circumstances; and, however affected and absurd, Miss Seward's prose is certainly far better than her verse.

And now I come to a very curious letter of James Ballantyne's, the date of which seems to fix pretty accurately the time when Scott *first* resumed the long-forgotten MS. of his Waverley. As in the Introduction of 1829 he mentions having received discouragement as to the opening part of the novel from two friends, and as Ballantyne on this occasion writes as if he had never before seen any portion of it, I conclude that the fragment of 1805 had in that year been submitted to Erskine alone.

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Ashestiel.*

"Dear Sir, "Edinburgh, Sept. 15, 1810.

"What you have sent of Waverley has amused me much; and certainly if I had read it as part of a new novel, the remainder

of which was open to my perusal, I should have proceeded with avidity. So much for its general effect; but you have sent me too little to enable me to form a decided opinion. Were I to say that I was equally struck with Waverley as I was with the much smaller portion of the Lady, which you first presented to us as a specimen, the truth would not be in me; but the cases are different. It is impossible that a small part of a fine novel can equally impress one with the decided conviction of splendor and success, as a small part of a fine poem. I will state one or two things that strike me. Considering that 'sixty years since' only leads us back to the year 1750, a period when our fathers were alive and merry, it seems to me that the air of antiquity diffused over the character is rather too great to harmonize with the time. The period is modern; Johnson was writing—and Garrick was acting—and in fact scarcely any thing appears to have altered, more important than the cut of a coat.

"The account of the studies of Waverley seems unnecessarily minute. There are few novel-readers to whom it would be interesting. I can see at once the connection between the studies of Don Quixote, or of the Female Quixote, and the events of their lives; but I have not yet been able to trace betwixt Waverley's character and his studies such clear and decided connection. The account, in short, seemed to me too particular; quite unlike your usual mode in your poetry, and less happy. It may be, however, that the further progress of the character will defeat this criticism. The character itself I think excellent and interesting, and I was equally astonished and delighted to find in the last-written chapter, that you can paint to the eye in prose as well as in verse.

"Perhaps your own reflections are rather too often mixed with the narrative—but I state this with much diffidence. I do not mean to object to a train of reflections arising from some striking event, but I don't like their so frequent recurrence. The language is spirited, but perhaps rather careless. The humor is admirable. Should you go on? My opinion is, clearly—certainly. I have no doubt of success, though it is impossible to guess how much. . . . . .—Ever respectfully,

J. B."

The part of the letter which I have omitted, refers to the state of Ballantyne's business at the time when it was written. He had that same week completed the eleventh edition of the Lay; and the fifth of the Lady of the Lake had not passed through his press before new orders from London called for the beginning of a sixth. I presume the printer's exultation on this triumphant success had a great share in leading him to consider with doubt and suspicion the propriety of his friend's interrupting just then

his career as the great caterer for readers of poetry. However this and other matters may have stood, the novel appears to have been forthwith laid aside again.

Some sentences refer to less fortunate circumstances in their joint affairs. The publishing firm was as yet little more than a twelvemonth old, and already James began to apprehend that some of their mightiest undertakings would wholly disappoint Scott's prognostications. He speaks with particular alarm of the edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, of which Weber had now dismissed several volumes from his incompetent and presumptuous hand. How Scott should ever have countenanced the project of an edition of an English book of this class, by a mere drudging *German*, appears to me quite inexplicable. He placed at Weber's disposal his own annotated copy, which had been offered some years before for the use of Gifford; but Weber's text is thoroughly disgraceful, and so are all the notes, except those which he owed to his patron's own pen. James Ballantyne augurs—and well might he do so—not less darkly as to "the Aston speculation"—that is, the bulky collection entitled "Tixal poetry." "Over this," he says, "the (Edinburgh) Review of the Sadler has thrown a heavy cloud—the fact is, it seems to me to have ruined it. Here is the same editor and the same printer, and your name withdrawn. I hope you agree with John and me, that this Aston business ought to be got rid of at almost any sacrifice. We could not now even ask a London bookseller to take a share, and a net outlay of near £2500, upon a worse than doubtful speculation, is surely 'most tolerable and not to be endured.'"

Another unpromising adventure of this season was the publication of the History of *the Culdees*, (that is, of the clergy of the primitive Scoto-Celtic Church,) by Scott's worthy old friend, Dr. John Jamieson, the author of the celebrated Dictionary. This work, treating of an obscure subject, on which very different opinions were and are entertained by Episcopalians on the one hand, and the adherents of Presbyterianism on the other, was also printed and published by the Ballantynes, in consequence of the inter-

est which Scott felt, not for the writer's hypothesis, but for the writer personally; and the result was another heavy loss to himself and his partners. But a far more serious business was the establishment of the Edinburgh Annual Register, which, as we have seen, was suggested by Scott in the very dawn of his bookselling projects. The two first volumes were issued about this time; and expectation had been highly excited by the announcement that the historical department was in the hands of Southey, while Scott and many other eminent persons were to contribute regularly to its miscellaneous literature and science. Mr. Southey was fortunate in beginning his narrative with the great era of the Spanish Revolt against Napoleon, and it exhibited his usual research, reflection, elegance, and spirit. Several of the miscellanies, also, were admirable: Mr. Southey inserted in the 2d volume for 1808, published in 1810, some of the most admired of his minor poems;—and Scott did the like. He, moreover, drew up for that volume an Essay of considerable extent on those changes in the Scottish System of Judicature which had occupied the attention of the Commission under which he served as secretary; and the sagacity of this piece appears, on the whole, as honorable to him as the clear felicity of its language. Nevertheless, the public were alarmed by the prospect of two volumes annually: it was, in short, a new periodical publication on a large scale: all such adventures are hazardous in the extreme; and none of them ever can succeed, unless there be a skilful bookseller, and a zealous editor, who give a very large share of their industry and intelligence, day after day, to the conduct of all its arrangements. Such a bookseller John Ballantyne was not; such an editor, with Scott's multifarious engagements, he could not be for an Annual Register; and who, indeed, could wish that this had been otherwise? The volumes succeeded each other at irregular intervals; there was soon felt the want of one ever-active, presiding spirit; and, though the work was continued during a long series of years, it never was the source of any thing but anxiety and disappointment to its original projectors.

I am tempted, as Scott's Essay on Judicial Reform has never been included in any collection of his writings, to extract here a few specimens of a composition which appears to be as characteristic of the man as any that ever proceeded from his pen. His deep jealousy of the national honor of Scotland, his fear lest the course of innovation at this time threatened should end in a total assimilation of her Jurisprudence to the system of the more powerful sister-country, and his habitual and deep-rooted dread of change in matters affecting the whole machinery of social existence, are expressed in, among others, the following passages:—

"An established system is not to be tried by those tests which may, with perfect correctness, be applied to a new theory. A civilized nation, long in possession of a code of law, under which, with all its inconveniences, they have found means to flourish, is not to be regarded as an infant colony, on which experiments in legislation may, without much charge of presumption, be hazarded. A philosopher is not entitled to investigate such a system by those ideas which he has fixed in his own mind as the standard of possible excellence. The only unerring test of every old establishment is the *effect* it has actually produced; for that must be held to be good from whence good is derived. The people have, by degrees, moulded their habits to the law they are compelled to obey; for some of its imperfections remedies have been found; to others they have reconciled themselves; till, at last, they have, from various causes, attained the object which the most sanguine visionary could promise to himself from his own perfect *unembodied* system. Let us not be understood to mean, that a superstitious regard for antiquity ought to stay the hand of a temperate reform. But the task is delicate, and full of danger; perilous in its execution, and extremely doubtful in its issue. Is there not rational ground to apprehend that, in attempting to eradicate the disease, the sound part of the constitution may be essentially injured? Can we be quite certain that less inconvenience will result from that newly-discovered and unknown remedy than from the evil, which the juices and humors with which it has long been incorporated may have neutralized?—that, after a thorough reformation has been achieved, it may not be found necessary to counterwork the antidote itself, by having recourse to the very error we have incautiously abjured? We are taught, by great authority, that 'possibly they may espy something that may, in truth, be mischievous in some particular case, but weigh not how many inconveniences are, on the other side, prevented or remedied by that which is the supposed vicious strictness of the law; and he that

purchases a reformation of a law with the introduction of greater inconveniences, by the amotion of a mischief, makes an ill bargain. No human law can be absolutely perfect. It is sufficient that it be best *ut plurimum;* and as to the mischiefs that it occasions, as they are accidental and casual, so they may be oftentimes, by due care, prevented, without an alteration of the main.' *

"Every great reform, we farther conceive, ought to be taken at a point somewhat lower than the necessity seems to require. Montesquieu has a chapter, of which the title is, *Qu'il ne faut pas tout corriger.* Our improvement ought to contain within itself a principle of progressive improvement. We are thus enabled to see our way distinctly before us; we have, at the same time, under our eyes, the ancient malady, with the palliatives by which the hand of time has controlled its natural symptoms, and the effects arising from the process intended to remove it; and our course, whether we advance or recede, will be safe, and confident, and honorable; whereas, by taking our reform at the utmost possible stretch of the wrong complained of, we cannot fail to bring into disrepute the order of things, as established, without any corresponding certainty that our innovations will produce the result which our sanguine hopes have anticipated; and we thus deprive ourselves of the chance of a secure retreat in the event of our failure."

Nor does the following paragraph on the proposal for extending to Scotland the system of *Jury Trial* in civil actions *of all classes,* appear to me less characteristic of Scott:—

"We feel it very difficult to associate with this subject any idea of political or personal liberty; both of which have been supposed to be secured, and even to be rendered more valuable, by means of the trial by jury in questions of private right. It is perhaps owing to our want of information, or to the phlegm and frigidity of our national character, that we cannot participate in that enthusiasm which the very name of this institution is said to excite in every patriotic bosom. We can listen to the cabalistic sound of Trial by Jury, which has produced effects only to be paralleled by those of the mysterious words uttered by the Queen of the City of Enchantments, in the Arabian Tale, and retain the entire possession of our form and senses. We understand that sentiment of a celebrated author, that this barrier against the usurpation of power, in matters where power has any concern, may probably avert from our island the fate of many states that now exist but in history; and we think this great possession is peculiarly valuable in Scotland, where the privileges of the public prosecutor are not controlled by those of a grand jury. The merits of the establish-

* Lord Hale on the Amendment of the Laws.

ment we are now examining are to be ascertained by a different test. It is merely a contrivance for attaining the ends of private justice, for developing the merits of a civil question in which individuals are interested; and that contrivance is the best which most speedily and effectually serves the purpose for which it was framed. In causes of that description, no shield is necessary against the invasion of power; the issue is to be investigated without leaning or partiality, for whatever is unduly given to one party is unduly wrested from the other; and unless we take under our consideration those advantages which time or accident may have introduced, we see not what superiority can in the abstract be supposed to belong to this as a judicature for the determination of all or the greater number of civil actions. We discover no ground for suspecting that the judgments of a few well-educated and upright men may be influenced by any undue bias; that an interest merely patrimonial is more safely lodged in an obscure and evanescent body than in a dignified, independent, and permanent tribunal, versed in the science to be administered, and responsible for the decisions they pronounce;—and we suspect that a philosopher, contemplating both in his closet, will augur more danger from a system which devolves on one set of men the responsibility of doctrines taught them by another, than from that system which attaches to the judges all the consequences of the law they deliver."

Some, though not all, of the changes deprecated in this Essay, had been adopted by the Legislature before it was published; others of them have since been submitted to experiment; and I believe that, on the whole, his views may safely bear the test to which time has exposed them—though as to the particular point of *trial by jury in civil causes*, the dreaded innovation, being conducted by wise and temperate hands, has, in its results, proved satisfactory to the people at large, as well as to the Bench and the Bar of Scotland. I have, however, chiefly introduced the above extracts as illustrative of the dissatisfaction with which Scott considered the commencement of a *system* of jurisprudential innovation; and though it must not be forgotten that his own office as a Clerk of Session had never yet brought him any thing but labor, and that he consequently complained from time to time of the inroads this labor made on hours which might otherwise have been more profitably bestowed, I suspect his antipathy to this new system, as a system, had no small share in producing

the state of mind indicated in a remarkable letter addressed, in the latter part of this year, to his brother Thomas. The other source of uneasiness to which it alludes has been already touched upon—and we shall have but too much of it hereafter. He says to his brother, (Ashestiel, 1st November, 1810,)—

"I have no objection to tell you in confidence, that, were Dundas to go out Governor-General to India, and were he willing to take me with him in a good situation, I would not hesitate to pitch the Court of Session and the booksellers to the devil, and try my fortune in another climate."

He adds, "but this is strictly *entre nous*"—nor indeed was I aware until I found this letter, that he had ever entertained such a design as that which it communicates. Mr. Dundas (now Lord Melville) being deeply conversant in our Eastern affairs, and highly acceptable to the Court of Directors in the office of President of the Board of Control, which he had long filled, was spoken of, at various times in the course of his public life, as likely to be appointed Governor-General of India. He had, no doubt, hinted to Scott that in case he should ever assume that high station, it would be very agreeable for him to be accompanied by his early friend; and there could be little question of his capacity to have filled with distinction the part either of an Indian secretary or of an Indian judge.

But though it is easy to account for his expressing in so marked a manner at this particular period his willingness to relinquish literature as the main occupation of his time, it is impossible to consider the whole course of his correspondence and conversation without agreeing in the conclusion of Mr. Morritt, that he was all along sincere in the opinion that literature ought never to be ranked on the same scale of importance with the conduct of business in any of the great departments of public life. This opinion he always expressed, and I have no doubt that at any period preceding his acquisition of a landed property, he would have acted on it, even to the extent of leaving Scotland, had a suitable opportunity been afforded him to give that evi-

dence of his sincerity. This is so remarkable a feature in his character, that the reader will forgive me should I recur to it in the sequel.

At the same time, I have no notion that at this or any other period he contemplated abandoning literature. Such a thought would hardly enter the head of the man, not yet forty years of age, whose career had been one of unbroken success, and whose third great work had just been received with a degree of favor, both critical and popular, altogether unprecedented in the annals of his country. His hope, no doubt, was that an honorable official station in the East might afford him both a world of new materials for poetry, and what would in his case be abundance of leisure for turning them to account, according to the deliberate dictates of his own judgment. What he desired to escape from was, not the exertion of his genius, which must ever have been to him the source of his most exquisite enjoyment, but the daily round of prosaic and perplexing toils, in which his connection with the Ballantynes had involved him. He was able to combine the regular discharge of such functions with the exercise of the high powers of imagination, in a manner of which history affords no other example; yet many, no doubt, were the weary hours, when he repented him of the rash engagements which had imposed such a burden of mere task-work on his energies. But his external position, before the lapse of another year, underwent a change, which forever fixed his destiny to the soil of his best affections and happiest inspirations.

The letters of Scott to all his friends have sufficiently shown the unflagging interest with which, among all his personal labors and anxieties, he watched the progress of the great contest in the Peninsula. It was so earnest that he never on any journey, not even in his very frequent passages between Edinburgh and Ashestiel, omitted to take with him the largest and best map he had been able to procure of the seat of war; upon this he was perpetually poring, tracing the marches and countermarches of the French and English, by means of black and white pins; and not seldom did Mrs. Scott complain of this constant

occupation of his attention and her carriage. In the beginning of 1811, a committee was formed in London to collect subscriptions for the relief of the Portuguese, who had seen their lands wasted, their vines torn up, and their houses burnt, in the course of Massena's last unfortunate campaign; and Scott, on reading the advertisement, immediately addressed Mr. Whitmore, the chairman, begging that the committee would allow him to contribute to their fund the profits, to whatever they might amount, of a poem which he proposed to write upon a subject connected with the localities of the patriotic struggle. His offer was of course accepted; and "THE VISION OF DON RODERICK" was begun as soon as the Spring vacation enabled him to retire to Ashestiel.

On the 26th of April he writes thus to Mr. Morritt, who had lost a dear young friend in the battle of Barrosa.

"I rejoice with the heart of a Scotsman in the success of Lord Wellington, and with all the pride of a seer to boot. I have been for three years proclaiming him as the only man we had to trust to—a man of talent and genius—not deterred by obstacles, not fettered by prejudices, not immured within the pedantries of his profession—but playing the general and the hero when most of our military commanders would have exhibited the drill sergeant, or at best the adjutant. These campaigns will teach us what we have long needed to know, that success depends not on the nice drilling of regiments, but upon the grand movements and combinations of an army. We have been hitherto polishing hinges, when we should have studied the mechanical union of a huge machine. Now—our army begin to see that the *grand secret*, as the French call it, consists only in union, joint exertion, and concerted movement. This will enable us to meet the dogs on fair terms as to numbers, and for the rest, 'my soul and body on the action both.'

"The downfall of Buonaparte's military fame will be the signal of his ruin, and, if we may trust the reports this day brings us from Holland, there is glorious mischief on foot already. I hope we shall be able to fling fuel into the flame immediately. A country with so many dikes and ditches must be fearfully tenable when the peasants are willing to fight. How I should enjoy the disconsolate visages of those Whig dogs, those dwellers upon the Isthmus, who have been foretelling the rout and ruin which it only required their being in power to have achieved! It is quite plain, from Sir Robert Wilson's account, that they neglected to feed the lamp of Russia, and it only resulted from their want of opportunity that they did not quench the smoking flax in the Peninsula—a

thought so profligate that those who, from party or personal interest, indulged it, ought to pray for mercy, and return thanks for the providential interruption which obstructed their purpose, as they would for a meditated but prevented parricide. But enough of the thorny subject of politics.

"I grieve for your loss at Barrosa, but what more glorious fall could a man select for himself or friend, than dying with his sword in hand and the cry of victory in his ears?

"As for my own operations, they are very trifling, though sufficiently miscellaneous. I have been writing a sketch of Buonaparte's tactics for the Edinburgh Register, and some other trumpery of the same kind. Particularly I meditate some wild stanzas referring to the Peninsula; if I can lick them into any shape, I hope to get something handsome from the booksellers for the Portuguese sufferers: 'Silver and gold have I none, but that which I have will I give unto them.' My lyrics are called the Vision of Don Roderick; you remember the story of the last Gothic King of Spain descending into an enchanted cavern to know the fate of the Moorish invasion—that is my machinery. Pray don't mention this, for some one will snatch up the subject as I have been served before; and I have not written a line yet. I am going to Ashestiel for eight days to fish and rhyme."

The poem was published, in 4to, in July; and the immediate proceeds were forwarded to the board in London. His friend, the Earl of Dalkeith, seems to have been a member of the committee, and he writes thus to Scott on the occasion:—

"Those with ample fortunes and thicker heads may easily give 100 guineas to a subscription, but the man is really to be envied who can draw that sum from his own brains, and apply the produce so beneficially and to so exalted a purpose."

I presume, however, that when his lordship thus mentions 100 guineas, he alludes merely to the first instalment of Scott's contribution.

In the original preface to this poem Scott alludes to two events which had "cruelly interrupted his task"—the successive deaths of his kind friend, the Lord President of the Court of Session, (Blair,)* and his early patron, Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville; and his letters at the time afford additional evidence of the shock his feelings had thus sustained.

* The Right Hon. Robert Blair of Avounton, son of the Author of "The Grave."

The following, to Mrs. Scott of Harden, is dated May 28th, 1811—

"My dear Madam,

"We are deprived of the prospect of waiting upon you on the birth-day by the confusion into which the business of this court is thrown by the most unexpected and irreparable loss which it has sustained in the death of the President—it is scarcely possible to conceive a calamity which is more universally, or will be so long, felt by the country. His integrity and legal knowledge, joined to a peculiar dignity of thought, action, and expression, had begun to establish in the minds of the public at large that confidence in the regular and solemn administration of justice, which is so necessary to its usefulness and respectability. My official situation, as well as the private intimacy of our families, makes me a sincere mourner on this melancholy occasion, for I feel a severe personal deprivation, besides the general share of sorrow common to all, of every party or description, who were in the way of witnessing his conduct.

"He was a rare instance of a man whose habits were every way averse to the cultivation of popularity, rising, nevertheless, to the highest point in the public opinion, by the manly and dignified discharge of his duty. I have been really so much shocked and out of spirits, yesterday and the day preceding, that I can write and think of nothing else.

"I have to send you the Vision of Don Roderick, as soon as we can get it out—it is a trifle I have written to eke out the subscription for the suffering Portuguese. Believe me, my dear Mrs. Scott, ever yours most truly and respectfully,

WALTER SCOTT."

The next letter is to Mr. Morritt, who, like himself, had enjoyed a large share of Lord Melville's friendly regard; and had more than once met his Lordship, after his fall, at the Poet's house in Castle Street; where, by the way, the old Statesman entered with such simple-heartedness into all the ways of the happy circle, that it had come to be an established rule for the children *to sit up to supper* whenever Lord Melville dined there.

"Edinburgh, July 1, 1811.

"My dear M.,

"I have this moment got your kind letter, just as I was packing up Don Roderick for you. This patriotic puppet-show has been finished under wretched auspices; poor Lord Melville's death so quickly succeeding that of President Blair, one of the best and

wisest judges that ever distributed justice, broke my spirit sadly. My official situation placed me in daily contact with the President, and his ability and candor were the source of my daily admiration. As for poor dear Lord Melville, 'Tis vain to name him whom we mourn in vain.' Almost the last time I saw him, he was talking of you in the highest terms of regard, and expressing great hopes of again seeing you at Dunira this summer, where I proposed to attend you. *Hei mihi! quid hei mihi? humana perpessi sumus.* His loss will be long and severely felt here, and Envy is already paying her cold tribute of applause to the worth that she maligned while it walked upon earth.

"There is a very odd coincidence between the deaths of these eminent characters, and that of a very inferior person, a dentist of this city, named Dubisson. He met the President the day before his death, who used a particular expression in speaking to him; the day before Lord Melville died, he also met Dubisson nearly on the same spot, and, to the man's surprise, used the President's very words in saluting him. On this second death, he expressed (jocularly, however) an apprehension that he himself would be the third—was taken ill, and died in an hour's space. Was not this remarkable? Yours ever,

W. S."

The Vision of Don Roderick had features of novelty, both as to the subject and the manner of the composition, which excited much attention, and gave rise to some sharp controversy. The main fable was indeed from the most picturesque region of old romance; but it was made throughout the vehicle of feelings directly adverse to those with which the Whig critics had all along regarded the interference of Britain in behalf of the nations of the Peninsula; and the silence which, while celebrating our other generals on that scene of action, had been preserved with respect to Scott's own gallant countryman, Sir John Moore, was considered or represented by them as an odious example of genius hoodwinked by the influence of party. Nor were there wanting persons who affected to discover that the charm of Scott's poetry had, to a great extent, evaporated under the severe test to which he had exposed it, by adopting, in place of those comparatively light and easy measures in which he had hitherto dealt, the most elaborate one that our literature exhibits. The production, notwithstanding the complexity of the Spenserian stanza, had

been very rapidly executed; and it shows, accordingly, many traces of negligence. But the patriotic inspiration of it found an echo in the vast majority of British hearts; many of the Whig oracles themselves acknowledged that the difficulties of the metre had been, on the whole, successfully overcome; and even the hardest critics were compelled to express unqualified admiration of various detached pictures and passages, which, in truth, as no one now disputes, neither he nor any other poet ever excelled. The whole setting or frame-work—whatever relates, in short, to the last of the Goths himself—was, I think, even then unanimously pronounced admirable; and no party feeling could blind any man to the heroic splendor of such stanzas as those in which the three equally gallant elements of a British army are contrasted. I incline to believe that the choice of the measure had been in no small degree the result of those hints which Scott had received on the subject of his favorite octosyllabics, more especially from Ellis and Canning; and, as we shall see presently, he about this time made more than one similar experiment, in all likelihood from the same motive.

Of the letters which reached him in consequence of the appearance of The Vision, he has preserved several, which had no doubt interested and gratified him at the time. One of these was from Lady Wellington, to whom he had never had the honor of being presented, but who could not, as she said, remain silent on the receipt of such a tribute to the fame of "the first and best of men." Ever afterwards she continued to correspond with him; and, indeed, among the very last letters which the Duchess of Wellington appears to have written, was a most affecting one, bidding him farewell, and thanking him for the solace his works had afforded her during her fatal illness. Another was in these terms.—

"*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

"Hinckley, July 26, 1811.

"My dear Sir,

"I am very glad that you have essayed a new metre—new, I mean, for you to use. That which you have chosen is, perhaps, at once the most artificial and the most magnificent that our language

affords; and your success in it ought to encourage you to believe, that, for you, at least, the majestic march of Dryden (to my ear the perfection of harmony) is not, as you seem to pronounce it, irrecoverable. Am I wrong in imagining that *Spenser* does not use the *plusquam-Alexandrine*—the verse which is as much longer than an Alexandrine as an Alexandrine is longer than an ordinary heroic measure? I have no books where I am, to which to refer. You use this—and in the first stanza.

"Your poem has been met on my part by an exchange somewhat like that of Diomed's armor against Glaucus's—brass for gold—a heavy speech upon bullion. If you have never thought upon the subject—as, to my great contentment, I never had a twelvemonth ago—let me counsel you to keep clear of it, and forthwith put my speech into the fire, unread. It has no one merit but that of sincerity. I formed my opinion most reluctantly; having formed it, I could not but maintain it; having maintained it in Parliament, I wished to record it intelligibly. But it is one which, so far from cherishing and wishing to make proselytes to, I would much rather renounce, if I could find a person to convince me that it is erroneous. This is at least an unusual state of mind in controversy. It is such as I do not generally profess on all subjects—such as you will give me credit for not being able to maintain, for instance, when either the exploits which you celebrate in your last poem, or your manner of celebrating them, are disputed or disparaged. Believe me, with great regard and esteem, very sincerely yours,

GEORGE CANNING."

But, of all the letters addressed to the author of the Vision of Don Roderick, I am very sure no one was so welcome as that which reached him, some months after his poem had ceased to be new in England, from a dear friend of his earliest days, who, after various chances and changes of life, was then serving in Lord Wellington's army, as a captain in the 58th regiment. I am sure that Sir Adam Ferguson's good-nature will pardon my inserting here some extracts from a communication which his affectionate schoolfellow very often referred to in after years with the highest appearance of interest and pleasure.

"*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

"Lisbon, 31st August, 1811.

"My dear Walter,

"After such a length of silence between us, and, I grant on my part, so unwarrantable, I think I see your face of surprise on

recognizing this MS., and hear you exclaim—What strange wind has blown a letter from *Linton?* I must say, that although both you and my good friend Mrs. S. must have set me down as a most indifferent, not to say ungrateful sort of gentleman, far otherwise has been the case, as, in the course of my wanderings through this country, I have often beguiled a long march, or watchful night's duty, by thinking on the merry fireside in North Castle Street. However, the irregular roving life we lead always interfered with my resolves of correspondence.

"But now, quitting self, I need not tell you how greatly I was delighted at the success of the Lady of the Lake. I dare say you are by this time well tired of such greetings—so I shall only say, that last spring I was so fortunate as to get a reading of it, when in the lines of Torres Vedras, and thought I had no inconsiderable right to enter into and judge of its beauties, having made one of the party on your first visit to the Trossachs; and you will allow, that a little vanity on my part on this account (every thing considered) was natural enough. While the book was in my possession, I had nightly invitations to *evening parties!* to read and illustrate passages of it; and I must say that (though not conscious of much merit in the way of recitation) my attempts to do justice to the grand opening of the stag-hunt, were always followed with bursts of applause—for this canto was the favorite among the rough sons of the fighting Third Division. At that time supplies of various kinds, especially any thing in the way of delicacies, were very scanty; and, in gratitude, I am bound to declare, that to the good offices of the Lady, I owed many a slice of ham, and rummer of hot punch, which, I assure you, were amongst the most welcome favors that one officer could bestow on another during the long rainy nights of last January and February. By desire of my messmates of the Black-cuffs, I some time ago sent a commission to London for a copy of the music of the boat-song 'Hail to the Chief,' as performed at Covent-Garden, but have not yet got it. If you can assist in this, I need not say that on every performance a flowing bumper will go round to the Bard. We have lately been fortunate in getting a good master to our band, who is curious in old Scotch and Irish airs, and has harmonized *Johnny Cope*, &c. &c. . . . .

"Lisbon, 6th October.

"I had written all the foregoing botheration, intending to send it by a wounded friend going home to Scotland, when, to my no small joy, your parcel, enclosing Don Roderick, reached me. How kind I take it your remembering old Linton in this way! A day or two after I received yours I was sent into the Alentejo, where I remained a month, and only returned a few days ago, much delighted with the trip. You wish to know how I like the Vision; but as you can't look for any learned critique from me, I shall only say that I fully entered into the spirit and beauty of

it, and that I relished much the wild and fanciful opening of the introductory part; yet what particularly delighted me were the stanzas announcing the approach of the British fleets and armies to this country, and the three delightful ones descriptive of the different troops, English, Scotch, and Irish; and I can assure you the Pats are, to a man, enchanted with the picture drawn of their countrymen, and the mention of the great man himself. Your swearing, in the true character of a minstrel, 'shiver my harp and burst its every chord,' amused me not a little. From being well acquainted with a great many of the situations described, they had of course the more interest, and 'Grim Busaco's iron ridge' most happily paints the appearance of that memorable field. You must know that we have got with us some bright geniuses, natives of the *dear country*, and who go by the name of 'the poets.' Of course a present of this kind is not thrown away upon indifferent subjects, but it is read and repeated with all the enthusiasm your warmest wish could desire. Should it be my fate to survive, I am resolved to try my hand on a snug little farm either up or down the Tweed, somewhere in your neighborhood, and on this dream many a delightful castle do I build.

"I am most happy to hear that the Club* goes on in the old smooth style. I am afraid, however, that, now * * * has become a judge, the delights of *Scrogum* and *The Tailor* will be lost, till revived perhaps by the old croupier in the shape of a battered half-pay officer. Yours affectionately,

ADAM FERGUSON."

More than one of the gallant captain's *chateaux en Espagne* were, as we shall see, realized in the sequel. I must not omit a circumstance which had reached Scott from another source, and which he always took special pride in relating, namely, that, in the course of the day when the Lady of the Lake first reached Sir Adam Ferguson, he was posted with his company on a point of ground exposed to the enemy's artillery; somewhere, no doubt, on the lines of Torres Vedras. The men were ordered to lie prostrate on the ground; while they kept that attitude, the Captain, kneeling at their head, read aloud the description of the battle in Canto VI., and the listening soldiers only interrupted him by a joyous huzza, whenever the French shot struck the bank close above them.

The only allusion which I have found, in Scott's letters,

* See Vol. I. page 123.

to the Edinburgh Review on his Vision, occurs in a letter to Mr. Morritt, (26th September, 1811,) which also contains the only hint of his having been about this time requested to undertake the task of rendering into English the *Charlemagne* of Lucien Buonaparte. He says—

"The Edinburgh Reviewers have been down on my poor Don hand to fist; but, truly, as they are too fastidious to approve of the campaign, I should be very unreasonable if I expected them to like the celebration of it. I agree with them, however, as to the lumbering weight of the stanza, and I shrewdly suspect it would require a very great poet indeed to prevent the tedium arising from the recurrence of rhymes. Our language is unable to support the expenditure of so many for each stanza: even Spenser himself, with all the license of using obsolete words and uncommon spellings, sometimes fatigues the ear. They are also very wroth with me for omitting the merits of Sir John Moore; but as I never exactly discovered in what these lay, unless in conducting his advance and retreat upon a plan the most likely to verify the desponding speculations of the foresaid reviewers, I must hold myself excused for not giving praise where I was unable to see that much was due. The only literary news I have to send you is, that Lucien Buonaparte's epic, in twenty-four *chants*, is about to appear. An application was made to me to translate it, which I negatived of course, and that roundly." *

I have alluded to some other new experiments in versification about this time as probably originating in the many hints of Ellis, Canning, and probably of Erskine, that, if he wished to do himself full justice in poetical narration, he ought to attempt at least the rhyme of Dryden's Fables. Having essayed the most difficult of all English measures in Don Roderick, he this year tried also the heroic couplet, and produced that imitation of Crabbe, *The Poacher*:— on seeing which, Crabbe, as his son's biography tells us, exclaimed, "This man, whoever he is, can do all that I can, and *something more*." This piece, together with some verses, afterwards worked up into the Bridal of Triermain, and another fragment in imitation of Moore's Lyrics, when first forwarded to Ballantyne, were accom-

* The ponderous epic, entitled *Charlemagne, ou l'Eglise Deliverée*, was published in 1814; and an English version, by the Rev. S. Butler and the Rev. F. Hodgson, appeared in 1815. 2 vols. 4to.

panied with a little note, in which he says: "Understand I have no idea of parody, but serious imitation if I can accomplish it. The subject for my Crabbe is a character in his line which he has never touched. I think of Wordsworth, too, and perhaps a ghost story after Lewis. I should be ambitious of trying Campbell; but his peculiarity consists so much in the matter, and so little in the manner, that (to his praise be it spoken) I rather think I cannot touch him." The three imitations which he did execute appeared in the Edinburgh Register for 1809, published in the autumn of 1811. They were there introduced by a letter entitled The Inferno of Altisidora, in which he shadows out the chief reviewers of the day, especially his friends Jeffrey and Gifford, with admirable breadth and yet lightness of pleasantry. He kept his secret as to this Inferno, and all its appendages, even from Miss Baillie—to whom he says, on their appearance, that—"the imitation of Crabbe had struck him as good; that of Moore as bad; and that of himself as beginning well, but falling off grievously to the close." He seems to have been equally mysterious as to an imitation of the quaint love verses of the beginning of the 17th century, which had found its way shortly before into the newspapers, under the name of The Resolve;* but I find him acknowledging its parentage to his brother Thomas, whose sagacity had at once guessed the truth. "As to the Resolve," he says, "it is mine; and it is not—or, to be less enigmatical, it is an old fragment which I coopered up into its present state with the purpose of quizzing certain judges of poetry, who have been extremely delighted, and declare that no living poet could write in the same exquisite taste." These critics were his friends of the Friday Club. When included in the Register, however, the Resolve had his name affixed to it. In that case his concealment had already answered its purpose. It is curious to trace the beginnings of the systematic mystification which he afterwards put in practice with regard to the most important series of his works.

* See Poetical Works, edition 1834, vol. viii. p. 374.

The quarto edition of Don Roderick having rapidly gone off, instead of reprinting the poem as usual in a separate octavo, he inserted it entire in the current volume of the Register—a sufficient proof how much that undertaking was already felt to require extraordinary exertion on the part of its proprietors. Among other minor tasks of the same year, he produced an edition of Wilson's Secret History of the Court of King James I., in two vols. 8vo, to which he supplied a copious preface, and a rich body of notes. He also contributed two or three articles to the Quarterly Review.

CHAPTER XII.

NEW ARRANGEMENT CONCERNING THE CLERKS OF SESSION — SCOTT'S FIRST PURCHASE OF LAND — ABBOTSFORD; TURN-AGAIN, ETC.—JOANNA BAILLIE'S ORRA, ETC. — DEATH OF JAMES GRAHAME — AND OF JOHN LEYDEN. — 1811.

Throughout 1811, Scott's serious labor continued to be bestowed on the advancing edition of Swift; but this and all other literary tasks were frequently interrupted in consequence of an important step which he took early in the year; namely, the purchase of the first portion of what became in the sequel an extensive landed property in Roxburghshire. He had now the near prospect of coming into the beneficial use of the office he had so long filled without emolument in the Court of Session. For, connected with the other reforms in the Scotch judicature, was a plan for allowing the retirement of functionaries, who had served to an advanced period of life, upon pensions; should this meet the approbation of parliament, there was little doubt Mr. George Home would avail himself of the opportunity to resign the place of which he had now for five years executed none of the duties; and the second Lord Mel-

ville, who had now succeeded his father as the virtual Minister for Scotland, had so much at heart a measure in itself obviously just and prudent, that little doubt could be entertained of the result of his efforts in its behalf. The Clerks of Session, it had been already settled, were henceforth to be paid not by fees, but by fixed salaries; the amount of each salary, it was soon after arranged, should be £1300 per annum; and contemplating a speedy accession of professional income so considerable as this, and at the same time a vigorous prosecution of his literary career, Scott fixed his eyes on a small farm within a few miles of Ashestiel, which it was understood would presently be in the market, and resolved to place himself by its acquisition in the situation to which he had probably from his earliest days looked forward as the highest object of ambition, that of a Tweedside Laird.—*Sit mihi sedes utinam senectæ!*

And the place itself, though not to the general observer a very attractive one, had long been one of peculiar interest for him. I have often heard him tell, that when travelling in his boyhood with his father from Selkirk to Melrose, the old man suddenly desired the carriage to halt at the foot of an eminence, and said, "We must get out here, Walter, and see a thing quite in your line." His father then conducted him to a rude stone on the edge of an acclivity, about half a mile above the Tweed at Abbotsford, which marks the spot

> "Where gallant Cessford's life-blood dear
> Reeked on dark Elliott's border spear."

This was the conclusion of the battle of Melrose, fought in 1526, between the Earls of Angus and Home, and the two chiefs of the race of Kerr, on the one side, and Buccleuch and his clan on the other, in sight of the young King James V., the possession of whose person was the object of the contest. This battle is often mentioned in the Border Minstrelsy; and the reader will find a long note on it, under the lines which I have just quoted from the Lay of the Last Minstrel. In the names of various localities between

Melrose and Abbotsford, such as *Skirmish-field*, *Charge-Law*, and so forth, the incidents of the fight have found a lasting record; and the spot where the retainer of Buccleuch terminated the pursuit of the victors by the mortal wound of Kerr of Cessford, (ancestor of the Dukes of Roxburghe,) has always been called *Turn-again*. In his own future domain, the young minstrel had before him the scene of the last great Clan-battle of the Borders.

On the 12th of May, 1811, he writes to James Ballantyne, apologizing for some delay about proof-sheets.

"My attention," he adds, "has been a little dissipated by considering a plan for my own future comfort, which I hasten to mention to you. My lease of Ashestiel is out—I now sit a tenant at will under a heavy rent, and at all the inconvenience of one when in the house of another. I have, therefore, resolved to purchase a piece of ground sufficient for a cottage and a few fields. There are two pieces, either of which would suit me, but both would make a very desirable property indeed. They stretch along the Tweed near half-way between Melrose and Selkirk, on the opposite side from Lord Somerville, and could be had for between £7000 and £8000—or either separate for about half the sum. I have serious thoughts of one or both, and must have recourse to my pen to make the matter easy. The worst is the difficulty which John might find in advancing so large a sum as the copyright of a new poem; supposing it to be made payable within a year at farthest from the work going to press,—which would be essential to my purpose. Yet the Lady of the Lake came soon home. I have a letter this morning giving me good hope of my Treasury business being carried through: if this takes place, I will buy both the little farms, which will give me a mile of the beautiful turn of Tweed, above Gala-foot—if not, I will confine myself to one. As my income, in the event supposed, will be very considerable, it will afford a sinking fund to clear off what debt I may incur in making this purchase. It is proper John and you should be as soon as possible apprized of these my intentions, which I believe you will think reasonable in my situation, and at my age, while I may yet hope to sit under the shade of a tree of my own planting. I shall not, I think, want any pecuniary assistance beyond what I have noticed, but of course my powers of rendering it will be considerably limited for a time. I hope this Register will give a start to its predecessors; I assure you I shall spare no pains. John must lend his earnest attention to clear his hands of the quire stock, and to taking in as little as he can, unless in the way of exchange; in short, reefing our sails, which are at present too much spread for our ballast."

He alludes in the same letter to a change in the firm of Messrs. Constable, which John Ballantyne had just announced to him; and, although some of his prognostications on this business were not exactly fulfilled, I must quote his expressions for the light they throw on his opinion of Constable's temper and character.

"No association," he says, "of the kind Mr. C. proposes, will stand two years with him for its head. His temper is too haughty to bear with the complaints, and to answer all the minute inquiries which partners of that sort will think themselves entitled to make, and expect to have answered. Their first onset, however, will be terrible, and John must be prepared to lie by. . . . . The new poem would help the presses."

The new partners to which he refers were Mr. Robert Cathcart, Writer to the Signet, a man of high worth and integrity, who continued to be connected with Constable's business until his death in November, 1812; and Mr. Robert Cadell, who afterwards married Mr. Constable's eldest daughter.*

Of the two adjoining farms, both of which he had at this time thought of purchasing, he shortly afterwards made up his mind that one would be sufficient to begin with; and he selected that nearest to Ashestiel, and comprising the scene of Cessford's slaughter. The person from whom he bought it was an old friend of his own, whose sterling worth he venerated, and whose humorous conversation rendered him an universal favorite among the gentry of the Forest—the late Rev. Dr. Robert Douglas, minister of Galashiels—the same man to whom Mrs. Cockburn described the juvenile prodigy of George's Square, in November, 1777. Dr. Douglas had never resided on the property, and his efforts to embellish it had been limited to one stripe of firs, so long and so narrow that Scott likened it to a black hair comb. It ran from the precincts of the homestead towards *Turn-again*, and has bequeathed the name of *the Doctor's redding-kame* to the mass of nobler trees amidst which its

* This union was dissolved by the death of the lady within a year of the marriage. Mr. Cadell, not long after the catastrophe of 1826, became sole publisher of Scott's later works.

dark straight line can now hardly be traced. The farm consisted of a rich meadow or haugh along the banks of the river, and about a hundred acres of ground behind, all in a neglected state, undrained, wretchedly enclosed, much of it covered with nothing better than the native heath. The farm-house itself was small and poor, with a common *kail-yard* on one flank, and a staring barn of the doctor's erection on the other; while in front appeared a filthy pond, covered with ducks and duckweed, from which the whole tenement had derived the unharmonious designation of *Clarty Hole*. But the Tweed was every thing to him—a beautiful river, flowing broad and bright over a bed of milk-white pebbles, unless here and there where it darkened into a deep pool, overhung as yet only by the birches and alders which had survived the statelier growth of the primitive forest; and the first hour that he took possession he claimed for his farm the name of the adjoining *ford*, situated just above the influx of the classical tributary Gala. As might be guessed from the name of *Abbotsford*, these lands had all belonged of old to the great Abbey of Melrose; and, indeed, the Duke of Buccleuch, as the territorial representative of that religious brotherhood, still retains some seignorial rights over them, and almost all the surrounding district. Another feature of no small interest in Scott's eyes was an ancient Roman road, leading from the Eildon hills to this ford, the remains of which, however, are now mostly sheltered from view amidst his numerous plantations. The most graceful and picturesque of all the monastic ruins in Scotland, the Abbey of Melrose itself, is visible from many points in the immediate neighborhood of the house; and last, not least, on the rising ground full in view across the river, the traveller may still observe the chief traces of that ancient British barrier, the *Catrail*, of which the reader has seen frequent mention in Scott's early letters to Ellis, when investigating the antiquities of Reged and Strathclyde.

Such was the territory on which Scott's prophetic eye already beheld rich pastures embosomed among flourishing groves, where his children's children should thank the

founder. But the state of his feelings, when he first called these fields his own, will be best illustrated by a few extracts from his letters. To his brother-in-law, Mr. Carpenter, he thus writes, from Ashestiel, on the 5th of August,—

"As my lease of this place is out, I have bought, for about £4000, a property in the neighborhood, extending along the banks of the river Tweed for about half a mile. It is very bleak at present, having little to recommend it but the vicinity of the river; but as the ground is well adapted by nature to grow wood, and is considerably various in form and appearance, I have no doubt that by judicious plantations it may be rendered a very pleasant spot; and it is at present my great amusement to plan the various lines which may be necessary for that purpose. The farm comprehends about a hundred acres, of which I shall keep fifty in pasture and tillage, and plant all the rest, which will be a very valuable little possession in a few years, as wood bears a high price among us. I intend building a small cottage for my summer abode, being obliged by law, as well as induced by inclination, to make this country my residence for some months every year. This is the greatest incident which has lately taken place in our domestic concerns, and I assure you we are not a little proud of being greeted as *laird* and *lady* of *Abbotsford*. We will give a grand gala when we take possession of it, and as we are very *clannish* in this corner, all the Scots in the country, from the Duke to the peasant, shall dance on the green to the bagpipes, and drink whisky punch. Now, as this happy festival is to be deferred for more than a twelvemonth, during which our cottage is to be built, &c. &c., what is there to hinder brother and sister Carpenter from giving us their company upon so gratifying an occasion? Pray, do not stay broiling yourself in India for a moment longer than you have secured comfort and competence. Don't look forward to *peace;* it will never come either in your day or mine."

The same week he says to Joanna Baillie—

"My dreams about my cottage go on; of about a hundred acres I have manfully resolved to plant from sixty to seventy; as to my scale of dwelling, why, you shall see my plan when I have adjusted it. My present intention is to have only two spare bed-rooms, with dressing-rooms, each of which will, on a pinch, have a couch bed; but I cannot relinquish my Border principle of accommodating all the cousins and *duniwastles*, who will rather sleep on chairs, and on the floor, and in the hay-loft, than be absent when folks are gathered together; and truly I used to think Ashestiel was very much like the tent of Paribanou, in the Arabian Nights, that suited alike all numbers of company equally; ten people fill it at any time, and I remember its lodging thirty-two without any com-

plaint. As for the *go-about*-folks, they generally pay their score one way or other; for you, who are always in the way of seeing, and commanding, and selecting your society, are too fastidious to understand how a dearth of news may make any body welcome that can tell one the current report of the day. If it is any pleasure to these stragglers to say I made them welcome as strangers, I am sure that costs me nothing—only I deprecate publication, and am now the less afraid of it that I think scarce any bookseller will be desperate enough to print a new Scottish tour. Besides, one has the pleasure to tell over all the stories that have bored your friends a dozen of times, with some degree of propriety. In short, I think, like a true Scotchman, that a stranger, unless he is very unpleasant indeed, usually brings a title to welcome along with him; and to confess the truth, I do a little envy my old friend Abouhassan his walks on the bridge of Bagdad, and evening conversations, and suppers with the guests whom he was never to see again in his life: he never fell into a scrape till he met with the Caliph—and, thank God, no Caliphs frequent the brigg of Melrose, which will be my nearest Rialto at Abbotsford.

"I never heard of a stranger that utterly baffled all efforts to engage him in conversation, excepting one whom an acquaintance of mine met in a stage-coach. My friend,* who piqued himself on his talents for conversation, assailed this tortoise on all hands, but in vain, and at length descended to expostulation. 'I have talked to you, my friend, on all the ordinary subjects—literature, farming, merchandise—gaming, game-laws, horse-races—suits at law—politics, and swindling, and blasphemy, and philosophy—is there any one subject that you will favor me by opening upon?' The wight writhed his countenance into a grin—'Sir,' said he, 'can you say any thing clever about *bend-leather?*' There, I own, I should have been as much nonplused as my acquaintance; but upon any less abstruse subject, I think, in general, something may be made of a stranger, worthy of his clean sheets, and beef-steak, and glass of port. You, indeed, my dear friend, may suffer a little for me, as I should for you, when such a fortuitous acquaintance talks of the intercourse arising from our meeting as any thing beyond the effect of chance and civility; but these braggings break no bones, and are always a compliment to the person of whom the discourse is held, though the narrator means it to himself; for no one can suppose the affectation of intimacy can be assumed unless from an idea that it exalts the person who brags of it. My little folks are well, and I am performing the painful duty of hearing my little boy his Latin lesson every morning—painful, because my knowledge of the language is more familiar than grammatical, and because little Walter has a disconsolate yawn at intervals which is quite irresistible, and has nearly cost me a dislocation of my jaws."

* This friend was Mr. William Clerk.

In answering the letter which announced the acquisition of Abbotsford, Joanna Baillie says, very prettily :—

"Yourself, and Mrs. Scott, and the children, will feel sorry at leaving Ashestiel, which will long have a consequence, and be the object of kind feelings with many, from having once been the place of your residence. If I should ever be happy enough to be at Abbotsford, you must take me to see Ashestiel too. I have a kind of tenderness for it, as one has for a man's first wife, when you hear he has married a second."

The same natural sentiment is expressed in a manner characteristically different, in a letter from the Ettrick Shepherd, of about the same date :—

"Are you not sorry at leaving *auld Ashestiel* for *gude an' a'*, after having been at so much trouble and expense in making it a complete thing? Upon my word I was, on seeing it in the papers."

That Scott had many a pang in quitting a spot which had been the scene of so many innocent and noble pleasures, no one can doubt; but the desire of having a permanent abiding-place of his own, in his ancestorial district, had long been growing upon his mind; and, moreover, he had labored in adorning Ashestiel, not only to gratify his own taste as a landscape gardener, but because he had for years been looking forward to the day when Colonel (now General) Russell would return from India to claim possession of his romantic inheritance. And he was overpaid for all his exertions, when the gallant soldier sat down at length among the trees which an affectionate kinsman had pruned and planted in his absence. He retained, however, to the end of his life, a certain "tenderness of feeling" tow ards Ashestiel, which could not perhaps be better shad owed than in Joanna Baillie's similitude. It was not his first country residence—nor could its immediate landscape be said to equal the Vale of the Esk, either in actual picturesqueness, or (before Marmion) in dignity of association. But it was while occupying Ashestiel that he first enjoyed habitually the free presence of wild and solitary nature; and I shall here quote part of a letter, in which he alludes to his favorite wildernesses between Tweed and Yarrow, in language, to. my mind, strongly indicative of the regrets and misgivings with which he must have taken

his farewell wanderings over them in the summer and autumn of 1811.

Miss Baillie had then in the press a new volume of Tragedies, but had told her friend that the publication, for booksellers' reasons, would not take place until winter. He answers (August 24th),—

"Were it possible for me to hasten the treat I expect by such a composition with you, I would promise to read the volume at the silence of noonday, upon the top of Minchmuir, or Windlestrawlaw. The hour is allowed, by those skilful in demonology, to be as full of witching as midnight itself; and I assure you, I have felt really oppressed with a sort of fearful loneliness, when looking around the naked and towering ridges of desolate barrenness, which is all the eye takes in from the top of such a mountain—the patches of cultivation being all hidden in the little glens and valleys—or only appearing to make one sensible how feeble and inefficient the efforts of art have been to contend with the genius of the soil. It is in such a scene that the unknown author of a fine, but unequal poem, called *Albania*, places the remarkable superstition which consists in hearing the noise of a chase, with the baying of the hounds, the throttling sobs of the deer, the hollos of a numerous band of huntsmen, and the 'hoofs thick beating on the hollow hill.' I have often repeated his verses with some sensations of awe in such a place, and I am sure yours would effect their purpose as completely."*

Miss Baillie sent him, as soon as it was printed, the book to which this communication refers; she told him it was to be her last publication, and that she was getting her knitting-needles in order—meaning to begin her new course of industry with a purse, by way of return for his Iona brooch. The poetess mentioned, at the same time, that she had met the evening before with a Scotch lady, who boasted that "she had once been Walter Scott's bedfellow."—"Don't start," adds Joanna; "it is thirty years since the irregularity took place, and she describes her old bedfellow as the drollestlooking, entertaining little urchin that ever was seen. I told her that you are a great, strong man, six feet high, but she does not believe me." In point of fact, the assigned

* The reader will find these lines from Albania (which Scott was very fond of repeating) quoted in a note to his ballad of "The Wild Huntsman."—*Poetical Works*, vol. vi. p. 308.

date was a lady's one; for the irregularity in question occurred on board the Leith smack which conveyed Walter Scott to London on his way to Bath, when he was only four years of age, A. D. 1775.

Miss Baillie's welcome volume contained, among others, her tragedy on the Passion of Fear; and Scott gives so much of himself in the letter acknowledging this present, that I must insert it at length.

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

"My dear Friend,

". . . . It is too little to say I am enchanted with the said third volume, especially with the two first plays, which in every point not only sustain, but even exalt, your reputation as a dramatist. The whole character of Orra is exquisitely supported as well as imagined, and the language distinguished by a rich variety of fancy, which I know no instance of excepting in Shakspeare. After I had read Orra twice to myself, Terry read it over to us a third time, aloud, and I have seldom seen a little circle so much affected as during the whole fifth act. I think it would act charmingly, omitting, perhaps, the baying of the hounds, which could not be happily imitated, and retaining only the blast of the horn and the halloo of the huntsmen at a distance. Only I doubt if we have now an actress that could carry through the mad scene in the fifth act, which is certainly one of the most sublime that ever were written. Yet I have a great quarrel with this beautiful drama, for you must know you have utterly destroyed a song of mine, precisely in the turn of your outlaw's ditty, and sung by persons in somewhat the same situation. I took out my unfortunate manuscript to look at it, but, alas! it was the encounter of the iron and the earthen pitchers in the fable. I was clearly sunk, and the potsherds not worth gathering up. But only conceive that the chorus should have run thus *verbatim*—

'Tis mirk midnight with peaceful men,
With us 'tis dawn of day'—

And again—

'Then boot and saddle, comrades boon,
Nor wait the dawn of day.'*

---

* These lines were accordingly struck out of the outlaw's song in Rokeby. The verses of *Orra*, to which Scott alludes, are no doubt the following:—

"The wild-fire dances on the fen,
The red star sheds its ray,
Up rouse ye, then, my merry men,
It is our opening day," &c.

Plays on the Passions, vol. iii. p. 44.

"I think the Dream extremely powerful indeed, but I am rather glad we did not hazard the representation. It rests so entirely on Osterloo, that I am almost sure we must have made a bad piece of work of it. By-the-by a story is told of an Italian buffoon, who had contrived to give his master, a petty prince of Italy, a good hearty ducking, and a fright to boot, to cure him of an ague; the treatment succeeded, but the potentate, by way of retaliation, had his audacious physician tried for treason, and condemned to lose his head: the criminal was brought forth, the priest heard his confession, and the poor jester knelt down to the block. Instead of wielding his axe, the executioner, as he had been instructed, threw a pitcher of water on the bare neck of the criminal; here the jest was to have terminated, but poor Gonella was found dead on the spot. I believe the catastrophe is very possible.* The latter half of the volume I have not perused with the same attention, though I have devoured both the Comedy and the Beacon in a hasty manner. I think the approbation of the public will make you alter your intention of taking up the knitting-needle—and that I shall be as much to seek for my purse as for the bank-notes which you say are to stuff it—though I have no idea where they are to come from. But I shall think more of the purse than the notes, come when or how they may.

"To return, I really think *Fear* the most dramatic passion you have hitherto touched, because capable of being drawn to the most extreme paroxysm on the stage. In Orra you have all gradations, from a timidity excited by a strong and irritable imagination, to the extremity which altogether unhinges the understanding. The most dreadful fright I ever had in my life (being neither constitutionally timid, nor in the way of being exposed to real danger) was in returning from Hampstead the day which I spent so pleasantly with you. Although the evening was nearly closed, I foolishly chose to take the short cut through the fields, and in that enclosure, where the path leads close by a thick and high hedge—with several gaps in it, however—did I meet one of your very thorough-paced London ruffians, at least judging from the squalid and jail-bird appearance and blackguard expression of countenance. Like the man that met the devil, I had nothing to say to him, if he had nothing to say to me; but I could not help looking back to watch the movements of such a suspicious figure, and to my great uneasiness saw him creep through the hedge on my left hand. I instantly went to the first gap to watch his motions, and saw him stooping, as I thought, either to lift a bundle or to speak to some person who seemed lying in the ditch. Immediately after, he came cowering back up the opposite side of the hedge, as returning towards me under cover of it. I saw no weapons he had, except a stick, but as I moved on to gain the stile which was to let me into the free field—with the idea of a wretch springing upon me from the covert at every step I

* This story is told, among others, by Montaigne.

took—I assure you I would not wish the worst enemy I ever had to undergo such a feeling as I had for about five minutes; my fancy made him of that description which usually combines murder with plunder, and though I was well armed with a stout stick and a very formidable knife, which when open becomes a sort of *skenedhu*, or dagger, I confess my sensations, though those of a man much resolved not to die like a sheep, were vilely short of heroism; so much so, that when I jumped over the stile, a sliver of the wood run a third of an inch between my nail and flesh, without my feeling the pain, or being sensible such a thing had happened. However, I saw my man no more, and it is astonishing how my spirits rose, when I got into the open field;—and when I reached the top of the little mount, and all the bells in London (for aught I know) began to jingle at once, I thought I had never heard any thing so delightful in my life—so rapid are the alternations of our feelings. This foolish story,—for perhaps I had no rational ground for the horrible feeling which possessed my mind for a little while, came irresistibly to my pen when writing to you on the subject of terror.

"Poor Grahame, gentle, and amiable, and enthusiastic, deserves all you can say of him; his was really a hallowed harp, as he was himself an Israelite without guile. How often have I teased him, but never out of his good-humor, by praising Dundee and laughing at the Covenanters!—but I beg your pardon, you are a Westland Whig too, and will perhaps make less allowance for a descendant of the persecutors. I think his works should be collected and published for the benefit of his family. Surely the wife and orphans of such a man have a claim on the generosity of the public.*

"Pray make my remembrance to the lady who so kindly remembers our early intimacy. I do perfectly remember being an exceedingly spoiled, chattering monkey, whom indifferent health and the cares of a kind Grandmamma and Aunt had made, I suspect, extremely abominable to every body who had not a great deal of sympathy and good-nature, which I dare say was the case of my *quondam* bedfellow, since she recollects me so favorably. Farewell, and believe me, faithfully and respectfully, your sincere friend,

WALTER SCOTT."

Miss Baillie, in her next letter, mentioned the name of the "old bedfellow," and that immediately refreshed Scott's recollection.

* James Grahame, author of The Sabbath, had been originally a member of the Scotch Bar, and was an early friend of Scott's. Not succeeding in the law, he (with all his love for the Covenanters) took orders in the Church of England, obtained a curacy in the County of Durham, and died there, on the 14th of September, 1811, in the 47th year of his age. See a Memoir of his Life and Writings in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1812, Part ii. pp. 384–415.

"I do," he replies, "remember *Miss Wright* perfectly well. Oh, how I should like to talk over with her our voyage in the good ship the Duchess of Buccleuch, Captain Beatson, master; much of which, from the novelty, doubtless, of the scene, is strongly impressed on my memory. A long voyage it was—of twelve days, if I mistake not, with the variety of a day or two in Yarmouth Roads. I believe the passengers had a good deal of fun with me; for I remember being persuaded to shoot one of them with an air-gun, who, to my great terror, lay obstinately dead on the deck, and would not revive till I fell a-crying, which proved the remedy specific upon the occasion."

The mention of Mr. Terry, in the letter about Orra, reminds me to observe that Scott's intimacy with that gentleman began to make very rapid progress from the date of the first purchase of Abbotsford. He spent several weeks of that autumn at Ashestiel, riding over daily to the new farm, and assisting his friend with advice, which his acquirements as an architect and draughtsman rendered exceedingly valuable, as to the future arrangements about both house and grounds. Early in 1812 Terry proceeded to London, and made, on the 20th May, a very successful *debut* on the boards of the Haymarket as Lord Ogleby. He continued, however, to visit Scotland almost every season, and no ally had more to do either with the plans ultimately adopted as to Scott's new structure, or with the collection of literary and antiquarian curiosities which now constitute its museum. From this time the series of letters between them is an ample one. The intelligent zeal with which the actor labored to promote the gratification of the poet's tastes and fancies on the one side; on the other, Scott's warm anxiety for Terry's professional success, the sagacity and hopefulness with which he counsels and cheers him throughout, and the good-natured confidence with which he details his own projects,—both the greatest and the smallest,—all this seems to me to make up a very interesting picture. To none of his later correspondents, with the one exception of Mr. Morritt, does Scott write with a more perfect easy-heartedness than to Terry; and the quaint dramatic turns and allusions with which these letters abound will remind all who knew him of the instinctive courtesy with which he

uniformly adopted in conversation a strain the most likely to fall in with the habits of any companion. It has been mentioned that his acquaintance with Terry sprung from Terry's familiarity with the Ballantynes; as it ripened, he had, in fact, learned to consider the ingenious comedian as another brother of that race; and Terry, transplanted to the south, was used and trusted by him, and continued to serve and communicate with him, very much as if one of themselves had found it convenient to establish his head-quarters in London.

Among the letters written immediately after Scott had completed his bargain with Dr. Douglas, is one which (unlike the rest) I found in his own repositories:—

"*For Dr. Leyden, Calcutta.*

"*Favored by the Hon. Lady Hood.*

"Ashestiel, 25th August, 1811.

"My dear Leyden,

"You hardly deserve I should write to you, for I have written you two long letters since I saw Mr. Purves, and received from him your valued dagger,* which I preserve carefully till Buonaparte shall come or send for it. I might take a cruel revenge on you for your silence, by declining Lady Hood's request to make you acquainted with her; in which case, I assure you, great would be your loss. She is quite a congenial spirit; an ardent Scotswoman, and devotedly attached to those sketches of traditionary history, which all the waters of the Burrampooter cannot, I suspect, altogether wash out of your honor's memory. This, however, is the least of her praises. She is generous, and feeling, and intelligent, and has contrived to keep her heart and social affections broad and awake amidst the chilling and benumbing atmosphere of London fashion. I ought perhaps first to have told you, that Lady H. *was* the honorable Mary Mackenzie, daughter of Lord Seaforth, and is the wife of Sir Samuel Hood, one of our most distinguished naval heroes, who goes out to take the command in your seas. Lastly, she is a very intimate friend of Mrs. Scott's and myself, and first gained my heart by her admiration of the Scenes of Infancy. So you see, my good friend, what your laziness would have cost you, if, listening rather to the dictates of revenge than generosity, I had withheld my pen from the inkhorn. But, to confess the truth, I fear two such minds would soon have found each other out, like good dancers in a ball-room, without the assistance of a master of

* A Malay crease, now at Abbotsford.

ceremonies. So I may even play Sir Clement Cotterel with a good grace, since I cannot further my vengeance by withholding my good offices. My last went by favor of John Pringle,* who carried you a copy of the Lady of the Lake, a poem which I really think you will like better than Marmion on the whole, though not perhaps in particular passages. Pray let me know if it carried you back to the land of mist and mountain?

"Lady Hood's departure being sudden, and your deserts not extraordinary, (speaking as a correspondent,) I have not time to write you much news. The best domestic intelligence is, that the Sheriff of Selkirkshire, his lease of Ashestiel being out, has purchased about 100 acres, extending along the banks of the Tweed, just above the confluence of the Gala, and about three miles from Melrose. There, saith fame, he designs to bigg himself a bower—*sibi et amicis*—and happy will he be when India shall return you to a social meal at his cottage. The place looks at present very like 'poor Scotland's gear.' It consists of a bank and a haugh as poor and bare as Sir John Falstaff's regiment; though I fear, ere you come to see, the verdant screen I am about to spread over its nakedness will have in some degree removed this reproach. But it has a wild, solitary air, and commands a splendid reach of the Tweed; and to sum all in the words of Touchstone, 'it is a poor thing, but mine own.'

"Our little folks, whom you left infants, are now shooting fast forward to youth, and show some blood, as far as aptitude to learning is concerned. Charlotte and I are wearing on as easily as this fashious world will permit. The outside of my head is waxing grizzled, but I cannot find that this snow has cooled either my brain or my heart.—Adieu, dear Leyden!—Pray, brighten the chain of friendship by a letter when occasion serves; and believe me ever yours, most affectionately,

WALTER SCOTT."

On the 28th of August, 1811, just three days after this letter was penned, John Leyden died. On the very day when Scott was writing it, he, having accompanied the Governor-General, Lord Minto, on the expedition against Java, dashed into the surf, that he might be the first Briton in the armament who should set foot on the island.

"When," says Scott, in his Sketch of Leyden's Life, "the well-concerted movements of the invaders had given them possession of the town of Batavia, he displayed the same ill-omened precipitation in his haste to examine a library, or rather warehouse of books, in which many Indian MSS. of value were said to be

* A son of Mr. Pringle of Whytbank.

deposited. The apartment had not been regularly ventilated, and either from this circumstance, or already affected by the fatal sickness peculiar to Batavia, Leyden, when he left the place, had a fit of shivering, and declared the atmosphere was enough to give any mortal a fever. The presage was too just. He took to his bed, and died in three days, on the eve of the battle which gave Java to the British empire—

'Grata quies patriæ, sed et omnis terra sepulchrum.'" *

The packet in which Lady Hood, on her arrival in India, announced this event, and returned Scott's unopened letter, contained also a very touching one from the late Sir John Malcolm, who, although he had never at that time seen the poet, assumed, as a brother Borderer lamenting a common friend, the language of old acquaintanceship; and to this Scott replied in the same style which, from their first meeting in the autumn of the next year, became that, on both sides, of warm and respectful attachment. I might also speak in the like tenor of a third letter in the same melancholy packet from another enthusiastic admirer of Leyden, Mr. Henry Ellis,† who also communicated to Scott his spirited stanzas on that untimely fate; but his personal intercourse with this distinguished diplomatist took place at a later period.

Before passing from the autumn of 1811, I may mention, that the letter of James Hogg, from which I have quoted an expression of regret as to Ashestiel, was one of many from the Shepherd bearing about this date, which Scott esteemed worthy of preservation. Strange as the fact may appear, Hogg, on the other hand, seems to have preserved none of the answers; but the half of the correspondence is quite sufficient to show how constantly and earnestly, in the midst of his own expanding toils and interests, Scott had continued to watch over the struggling fortunes of the wayward and imprudent Shepherd. His letters to the different members of the Buccleuch family at this time are full of the same subject. I shall insert one,

* This little biography of Leyden is included in Scott's Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. iv. p. 137.

† Now the Right Honorable Henry Ellis, appointed, in 1836, ambassador from the Court of St. James's to the Shah of Persia.

addressed, on the 24th of August, to the Countess of Dalkeith, along with a presentation copy of Hogg's "Forest Minstrel." It appears to me a remarkable specimen of the simplest natural feelings on more subjects than one, couched in a dialect which, in any hands but the highest, is apt to become a cold one:—

"Ashestiel, Aug. 24, 1811.

"Dear Lady Dalkeith,

"The Ettrick Bard, who compiled the enclosed collection, which I observe is inscribed to your Ladyship, has made it his request that I would transmit a copy for your acceptance. I fear your Ladyship will find but little amusement in it; for the poor fellow has just talent sufficient to spoil him for his own trade, without having enough to support him by literature. But I embrace the more readily an opportunity of intruding upon your Ladyship's leisure, that I might thank you for the very kind and affecting letter with which you honored me some time ago. You do me justice in believing that I was deeply concerned at the irreparable loss you sustained in the dear and hopeful boy* to whom all the friends of the Buccleuch family looked forward with so much confidence. I can safely say, that since that inexpressible misfortune, I almost felt as if the presence of one, with whom the recollection of past happiness might in some degree be associated, must have awakened and added to your Ladyship's distress from a feeling that scenes of which we were not to speak, were necessarily uppermost in the recollection of both. But your Ladyship knows better than I can teach, that, where all common topics of consolation would be inapplicable, Heaven provides for us the best and most effectual lenitive in the progress of time, and in the constant and unremitting discharge of the duties incumbent on the station in which we are placed. Those of your Ladyship are important, in proportion to the elevation of your rank, and the promising qualities of the young minds which I have with so much pleasure seen you forming and instructing to be comforts, I trust, to yourself, and an honor to society. Poor Lady Rosslyn† is gone, with all the various talent and vivacity that rendered her society so delightful. I regret her loss the more, as she died without ever making up some unkindness she had towards me for these foolish politics. It is another example of the great truth, that life is too short for the indulgence of animosity. I have the honor to be,

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* Lord Scott. See *ante*, pp. 137, 138.

† The Countess of Rosslyn, born Lady Harriet Bouverie, a very intimate friend of Lady Dalkeith, died 8th August, 1810. She had, as has been mentioned before, written to Scott, resenting somewhat warmly his song at the Melville dinner. See *ante*, p. 103.

with the greatest respect, your Ladyship's obliged and very humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

The Countess, in acknowledgment of the dedication of the Forest Minstrel, sent Hogg, through Scott's hands, the donation of a hundred guineas—a sum which, to him, in those days, must have seemed a fortune; but which was only the pledge and harbinger of still more important benefits conferred soon after her Ladyship's husband became the head of his house.

END OF VOL. II

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